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The "Teaching of English" Series

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38

THE APPROACH TO CHAUCER

No. 8

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

From a pen drawing after the
Ellesmere Manuscript by
E. Heber Thompson

THE APPROACH TO CHAUCER

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THE APPROACH TO CHAUCER

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

THE poet Chaucer was born in London in or about the year 1340, and he died in the year 1400.

If we read his poems, we shall find that he wrote a very different English from the language we use to-day. Many of the words have so changed that you would need to look them up in a glossary or a dictionary, as in reading a foreign language, and others which are recognizable are often spelt quite differently.

All the same, you would make no mistake as to the language being English, and it was in fact the early form of the same language which we now speak and write, though Chaucer was one of the first writers to use this for writing poems and prose. Most books in those days were written in Latin, and since the Norman Conquest French had been not only the language of the English Court but the one which was taught in the schools, and in which most of the love-songs and other verses before the time of Chaucer were written.

It is because Chaucer was the earliest great poet to use the new English language, which was gradually

coming into general use among the Normans and their descendants, that the poet Tennyson, writing in the nineteenth century, speaks of him as

" ——that morning star of song, who made
His music heard below.
* * * * *
Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still."

Perhaps it may puzzle you that Tennyson should call the poet " Dan Chaucer " when his Christian name was Geoffrey, so I must explain that Dan was not really a name but a title of respect, and short for the Latin word *dominus*, which means "lord" or "master."

Not very much that is certain is known of Chaucer's life, but from the little we do know he appears to have been a man of some importance in his day, who held responsible posts in connection with the Court, and was granted a royal pension.

His father was in attendance on King Edward the Third of England, and as a little boy Chaucer was brought up in the atmosphere of the Court. Where he went to school I cannot tell you, nor even whether he went to the university ; but it is thought probable that he was either at Oxford or Cambridge, because he writes about both as though he was personally familiar with them. He describes the country round Cambridge in one of his tales, and in another speaks of the life of a student or undergraduate at Oxford, and describes his room so clearly that the description might be taken from his own experience.

This is what he says :—

" He had a room entirely to himself, all elegantly decorated with sweet flowers. In it he had his *Almageste* (a treatise on astrology) and his astrolabe (an instrument for astronomical calculations) ; and his

augrim stones (also for calculations) were carefully placed apart on a shelf at the head of his bed. His press was hidden by a cover of coarse cloth, and on the top of it lay a sautyre, or small instrument like a harp, to which he used to sing of an evening so sweetly that the whole room echoed with it. And first he would sing a hymn to the Virgin in Latin, and this he would follow by a song called 'The King's Note.'"

Whether this picture of Oxford life is drawn from the poet's own experience or not we cannot tell, but it is not unreasonable to think that it may have been.

In any case, college life began so early in those days that Chaucer may well have left Oxford when he was seventeen, at which age we find him acting as a page in the household of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of King Edward the Third. There is a record still of the costume with which the young page was provided, so we can imagine him in a short cloak, with red and black breeches, and wearing shoes.

A little later he accompanied his master to the French wars, and perhaps he had his own youthful figure in his mind when he wrote the description which we shall read later, of the gay young squire with the curling locks, who sang his own verses to the accompaniment of a lute.

Unfortunately the campaign was not a success for the English, and young Chaucer was taken prisoner. But as the king paid a ransom of £16 for his release, we may conclude that he had acquitted himself honourably and well; and though Chaucer fought against the French, and was taken prisoner by them, he never allows any trace of bitterness or ill-nature against his enemies to appear in his writings.

In 1367 the king gave Chaucer a life pension, and he seems to have been attached to the Court at the time. Later on he was sent on various foreign embassies, which would give him much of the knowledge of the world and of men and women which he shows

in his writings. The most important of these journeys was to Italy, the country which above all others in Europe kept alive the love of art and learning in the Middle Ages.

After his return from Italy, Chaucer was appointed to an office in the Customs, and settled down in a house in Aldgate in the City of London, where he found time for much quiet study, and where he wrote some of his works. From there he moved to Greenwich, and later to Westminster. But evil times overtook the poet. Edward the Third had died in 1377, and his grandson the new king, who reigned as Richard the Second, was but a little boy of eleven, whose uncles tried to wrest the power from his feeble hands. The elder of these uncles, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, had always been a friend and patron of Chaucer's, and it is said that Chaucer's wife and the Duchess of Lancaster were sisters. But in 1386, while the duke was absent in Spain, his younger brother Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, usurped much of the power from Richard, and took the opportunity of dismissing Chaucer from his offices. For a time the poet was in difficulties and very short of money, but it is pleasant to know that later on, when John of Gaunt returned, the poet received several other appointments, so that the concluding years of his life were spent in comfort. He lived to see the weak king, Richard the Second, deposed and imprisoned, and his cousin Henry, the son of John of Gaunt, on the throne in his place. Very soon after these events he died.

Of Chaucer's home life we know very little, beyond the fact that he married and had two sons, for one of whom he wrote a treatise on the astrolabe to help him in his studies as a little boy.

But little though we know of Chaucer's life, we do know something of his character and tastes, for of these he tells us in his works. In one part of the

Canterbury Tales he gives us a description of himself, which enables us to picture him clearly, and which I will now give to you.

The Landlord or host in the *Canterbury Tales* addresses Chaucer in the following terms :—

" What manner of man art thou who dost nothing but stare on the ground as though on the look-out for a hare ? Approach, man, and look up merrily." He then goes on to describe Chaucer's appearance.

" He is as big in the waist as myself," he said, " and yet his looks are somewhat elfish."

In one of his minor poems Chaucer also tells us something of his own habits. The poem is called " The House of Fame," and in this he describes himself in the following manner :—

" Thou " (that is Chaucer himself) " shuttest up thyself so that no outside tidings reach thee even of thy own neighbours dwelling almost at thy very door. Thou hearest neither this nor that, for no sooner is thy work done, than thou goest to thy house anon, and as dumb as a stone sittest at thy book, until full dazed is thy look. Thou livest thus as a hermit."

But though Chaucer thus describes his habits as those of a scholar and recluse, we have proof in his works that he did not shut himself up altogether away from his fellow-men. His writings show that this was not the case ; for he had a great knowledge of human nature, and his descriptions of different characters are so lifelike that no other writer approaches them until we come to Shakespeare, two hundred years later.

Another of Chaucer's great characteristics was his love of nature. No poet ever had a greater love of English landscape, of fields full of blossom, of a spring morning when the hedges were white with hawthorn, or of a garden full of flowers. Of all flowers the daisy was his favourite, and over and over again he speaks of this humble wild flower with tenderness and enthusiastic admiration.

In a poem called "The Legend of Good Women," he says :—

> "Now of all the flowers in the mead,
> Love I most those flowers white and red
> That men call daisies in our town ;
> For them have I so great an affection,
> As I said erst, that when come is May
> From my bed there dawneth no day
> But I am up and walking in the mead
> To see this flower against the sunlight spread,
> When it upriseth early by the morrow ;
> That blissful sight softeneth all my sorrow."

In another poem called "The Flower and the Leaf," he tells us how he used to rise at three in the morning, before the sun was up, and wander forth into the woods and meadows to enjoy the sweet country sights and hear the happy song of the birds at sunrise.

In his Knight's Tale of Palamon and Arcite we shall read of his characters doing the same thing, and starting forth in the early hours of the morning to enjoy the country. And over and over again does the poet pick out the month of May as the one in which he most delights. He tells of the freshness and gladness of the mornings when the March winds and April showers have given place to the warm breath of May breezes, and the meadows are filled with flowers and the trees covered with blossom. When he wishes to describe any one as very bright and attractive, he compares him to this month he loves so well.

It is not surprising that Chaucer loved the month of May. It is often the most cheerful month of the whole year, as he himself is the most cheerful of poets. Never throughout his works is there trace of the self-pity or of the complaints which often mar the work of even great poets ; and more unusual still, among the twenty-four stories which he tells in the great

work known as the *Canterbury Tales*, there is hardly one which does not end happily.

Before concluding, I must tell you of the advice he gave to the young king.

Richard the Second's instability of character is well known, and eventually brought about his downfall. As a little boy of eleven, soon after he came to the throne, he showed great promise and courage. For when the mob rose against him in London he rode out to meet the unruly people attended by his nobles and by Walworth, the Lord Mayor. There was a minute of intense danger when Walworth, yielding to a rash impulse, struck down Wat Tyler, the leader of the rebels. At this critical point, we are told, Richard boldly rode across to them, and with the words, "I am your leader," prevented the threatened tumult.

But unfortunately he did not live up to this good beginning, and many fine promises which he made to the people he afterwards broke, and thus confidence in him was lost.

This lack of steadfastness was much deplored by Chaucer, and he sent a short poem to the king, pointing out the value of this quality of steadfastness both to an individual and a nation, for he saw that the people were affected by the lack of it in the king. This is how he ends the poem :—

> "Prince, desire to be honourable,
> Cherish thy people and hate extortion,
> Suffer nothing that may be reprovable
> To thine estate, done in thy region ;
> Show forth the rod of castigation ;
> Fear God, do law, love truth and worthiness,
> And wed thy folk again to Steadfastness."

I think these stirring words of the poet to the young king are well worthy to be remembered by us all.

Chaucer wrote many short poems, and he also translated from the Latin a work by Bœthius, a Roman

philosopher, called " The Consolations of Philosophy." But his longest work, and the one by which he is best remembered, is the *Canterbury Tales*, which he wrote towards the close of his life. It consists of a collection of stories supposed to be related by a party of twenty-nine pilgrims on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury ; and some of the most interesting of these stories you will find in this book, with an account of the pilgrims who told them. You could not easily read the tales for yourselves in the original, partly because, as I have already said, they are written in a language so different from our modern English that you would find it difficult or impossible to make sense of it ; so I have put them into a form that you can easily understand, and some day when you are older I hope you will read them in Chaucer's own language as well.

"NATURE'S SWEET CHORISTER"

[The following stanzas are modernized from Chaucer's poem "The Flower and the Leaf," of which the idea or meaning is as follows:—A Gentlewoman, out of an arbour, in a grove, sees a great company of knights and ladies in a dance upon the green grass; which being ended, they all kneel down and do honour to the Daisy, some to the Flower and some to the Leaf. Afterward, the Gentlewoman learns, by one of these ladies, the meaning thereof, which is this: *They which honour the Flower, a thing fading with every blast, are such as look after beauty and worldly pleasures; but they that honour the Leaf, which abideth with the root, notwithstanding the frost and winter storms, are they which follow virtue and enduring qualities without regard of worldly prospects.*]

I

When Phœbus bright his chair of gold so high
Had whirléd up the starry sky aloft,
And in the Bull was entered certainly;
When sweetest showers of rain descending soft,
Had caused the ground full many a time and oft
To breathe around a fresh and wholesome air,
And every dewy plain was clothéd fair

II

With newest green; and bright and little flowers
Sprung here and there in every field and mead;
So very good and wholesome be the showers,
That they renew whate'er was old or dead

Phœbus, the sun, or the god of the sun, according to the Greeks.

In winter time, and out of every seed
Bursteth the herb, so that each living wight
In this fresh season waxeth glad and light ;

III

And I rejoicing in this season sweet,
Was happéd thus ; upon a certain night,
As on my bed I lay, for sleep unmeet,
Weary yet restless ;—but wherefore I might
Not sleep, I wist not ; for no living wight,
As I suppose, had more of heart-felt ease,
For I had neither sorrow nor disease ;

IV

Wherefore, I marvel greatly at myself,
That for so long a time I sleepless lay :
And up I rose at three hours after twelve,
About the springing of the gladsome day,
And on I put my gear and mine array,
And to a pleasant grove my footsteps bent
Long ere the sun had lit the firmament.

V

And in this grove stood great oaks in a line,
Under the which the grass, so fresh of hue,
Was newly sprung ; and, some eight feet or nine
Apart, each tree from his tall fellow grew,
With branches broad, laden with foliage new,
Which had sprung out to welcome the Sun sheen,--
Some very red, and some a glad light green.

VI

Which as methought was a right pleasant sight ;
And eke the birds' songs in the trees to hear,
Would have rejoicéd any earthly wight ;
And I who could not yet hope any where
To hear the nightingale through all the year,

Now hearkened busily with heart and ear
If I could catch her voice far off or near.

VII

At length a path of little width indeed,
I found, that greatly had not uséd been,
For it was overgrown with grass and weed,
So that by many a wight it was not seen :—
Thought I, this path must lead somewhere, I ween ;
And so I followed on till me it brought
To a right pleasant Bower with cunning wrought.

VIII

Soft seats were all around with green turfs new,
Just freshly turfed ; and, lo ! the pleasant grass
So small, so thick, so short, so fresh of hue,
That most like to green wool, I wot, it was ;
And eke the hedge that round about it grew
Was full of flowers. It was a gentle bower
Woven with eglantine and sycamour.

IX

And it was wreathed around so cunningly,
That every branch and flower grew forth by measure
Smooth as a board, and growing just so high
As seeméd nearest to the maker's pleasure :
It was of pleasant bowers the veriest treasure,
So that all men must say that had it seen,
It passéd all the bowers that e'er had been.

X

Well shapen was this arbour's roof withal,
And as a little parlour wrought, also
The hedge was thick as is a castle wall ;
So that who list without to stand or go,
Though he would all the day pry to and fro,

He could not see if there were any wight
Within or not ; but one within well might

XI

Perceive all those that travelled there without
Into the field that was on every side
Covered with corn or grass, that out of doubt,
Though one should seek thro' all the world so wide,
So fair a meadow could not be espied
In any Eastern clime, nor any where,
For it was full of all things good and fair.

XII

And I, that all this pleasant sight did see,
Thought suddenly, I felt so sweet an air
Breathe from the eglantine, that certainly
There is no heart, I deem, in such despair,
Nor with dark thoughts of weariness and care
So overlaid, but it would straight have ease
Could it but feel such gentle airs as these.

XIII

And as I stood and cast mine eyes around
I saw, I ween, the fairest medlar tree,
That ever was in field or forest found,
As full of blossoms as it well could be ;
Therein a goldfinch leapéd prettily
From bough to bough, and as he list, did eat
Now here and there of buds and flowers sweet.

XIV

This fragrant tree was near the arbour's side,
Of which I spake ; and when this golden bird
His hunger had with blossoms satisfied,
He then began to sing ;—I never heard
Warblings so passing sweet, no honeyed word

Whispered from maiden's tongue could e'er compare
With the sweet music which now filled the air.

XV

And then the nightingale to answer him,
Poured forth a flood of merry song ; the wood
Stirred with the echoes of this glorious hymn ;
As one o'ercome with wonderment I stood
So long entranced that, do whate'er I could,
I wist not where I was, for far and near
Still thrilled this heavenly music in mine ear.

XVI

At length I 'gan to look on every side
Most busily, that I this bird might see,
And all upon a sudden I espied
Where she was sitting in a laurel tree,
Upon the farther side and close by me,
That gave so passing a delicious smell,
Accordant to the eglantine full well.

XVII

Wherein I had so exquisite a pleasure,
That as methought I sure entrancéd was,
And lulled in Paradise ; no deeper measure
Of bliss could be, nor ever hope to pass
Beyond that day ; and so upon the grass
I laid myself that I might easier hear
This bird's fresh song, Nature's sweet chorister.

XVIII

More pleasant far to me, by many fold,
Than meat or drink, or any other thing,—
The dewy arbour was so fresh and cold,
The wholesome fragrance eke so comforting,
That as I deemed, since Time first stirred his wing
To starry songs when this bright world began,
This was the sweetest spot for mortal man.

THOMAS POWELL.

THE LEGEND OF ARIADNE

[The following story is modernized from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, a series of love stories which he never completed.]

MINOS, who was the mighty king of Crete,
And had a hundred cities strong and great,
To school hath sent his son Androgeus
At Athens, of the which it happened thus,—
That he was slain, learning philosophy
Right in that town, for hate and jealousy!

The puissant Minos, of the which I speak,
With wrath a-flame, comes all his rage to wreak,
And Alcatho besieged fiercely and long;
But ne'ertheless the walls were built so strong,
And Nisus, who was king of that brave town,
So chivalrous, and of so great renown,
That he for Minos and his warlike host
Caréd no more than if he had been a ghost.
Till on a day a strange adventure fell,
Of which I will, as short as may be, tell.
The daughter fair of Nisus stood upon
The lofty wall, to see the siege go on;
And looking at the gallant skirmishing,
She cast her heart on Minos, the great king:
And for his beauty and his chivalry
She longéd so, that she was like to die,
And, faithless to her sire, did on a day
To the besiegers this strong town betray.

Now all the town was at the conqueror's will,
To save whoe'er he list, or else to kill ;
But he requited ill her lovingness,
And let her drench in sorrow and distress,
Nor did the gods to her their pity show ;—
But this to tell, my tale too long would grow.
Now Athens did king Minos take alsó,
And other towns beside this Alcatho ;
And made them send their children year by year,
To be devoured, as ye shall after hear.

A monster had this Minos, and a beast
So cruel, that it could not be increased,
And whensoe'er a man before him came,
Naked or arm'd, him would he eat the same !
Now every third year, 'tis beyond all doubt,
They cast lots, as the season came about,
Both rich and poor ; for one his son must take,
And of his child a struggling offering make,
To Minos, that he might reject or kill,
Or let his beast devour him at his will ;
And this hath Minos done in his despite.
T' avenge his son was now his prime delight.

Now home he sailéd when this town was won :
This wicked custom had so long run on,
Till when in Athens, ruled king Egeus,
He must dispatch his dear son Theseus,
Since that the lot hath fallen upon him,
To be devouréd by this monster grim.
And forth is led this young and woeful knight
Unto the realm of Minos, full of might,

And in a prison he is chained right fast,
Till time was to the beast he should be cast !

Well mayst thou weep, O woeful Theseus !
To be a king's son, and yet treated thus.
Methinketh that thy love would be most great
To her who saved thee from so dread a fate :
And that if any maid gave help to thee,
Well mightest thou her servant long to be ;
Or else her lover, true and not to fail :

But now to come again to this sad tale !
The dungeon where Prince Theseus was thrown,
Was dark and low, and cold, and built of stone,
And was right near unto the palace wing
Where dwelt the two fair daughters of the King.
It happéd thus as Theseus by night
Bewailed his fate, and dreaded morning's light,
Fair Ariadne and her sister heard
In the night's silence every sorrowful word ;
While on a turret looking at the moon
They stood, not caring for their couch so soon ;
And they had sweet compassion on his woe,
For a king's son in prison thus to throw
To be devoured, begat their sympathy.

Then Ariadne spake her sister free,
And said—O sweetest Phædra, sister dear,
This woeful lord's son ye may plainly hear :
How piteously he mourneth his hard fate,
And groaneth o'er his sorrowful estate :—
Guiltless is he, ah ! certes, of the ruth,
And if ye will assist me, by my troth,
He shall be helped, whatever we may do.
And Phædra answered : Sister dear, I trow
I feel for him more than for any man,
And for his aid will do whate'er I can.
Let us the gaoler summon privily,
To come and speak with us right hastily,

And with him shall this woeful prisoner come ;
For if he may this monster overcome,
Then were he free, there is no other boot.
Let us well test him unto his heart's root,
That if he any deadly weapon have
Will he therewith his life fight for, and save,
And combat this strong fiend, or his life end ?
For as he in the prison shall descend,
Ye know right well, the beast is in a place
Which is not dark, and there is ample space
To wield an axe, or sword, a staff, or knife,
So that methinketh he shall save his life :
If that he be a man, he shall do so.
And we will make him many balls of tow
And eke of wax, that when he gapeth fast,
Down the beast's grisly throat he shall them cast,
To slake his hunger, and to blunt his teeth ;
And right anon, when valiant Theseus seeth
The beast a-choking, he shall on him leap
And slay him. Chains no more shall Theseus keep :
This weapon shall the gaoler at that tide,
Within the prison in some dark place hide ;
And as the house is guarded to and fro,
And hath so many curious windings too,
Thus quaintly by the skilful mason wrought ;
For this I have a remedy in thought,
That by a clew of twine, as he hath gone,
By the same way he may return anon
By following the thread as he hath come.
And when this beast is fully overcome,
Then may he from his doleful prison flee,
And take the gaoler with him when he's free ;
So shall he come to his own home anon,
Since that he is so great a monarch's son !

This is my plan, if that you dare it take,
But why should I a longer sermon make ?

The gaoler came, and with him Theseus,
And then these things I tell, accorded thus :—
Adown sank Theseus upon his knee,
Ah ! sovran lady of my life, (quoth he)
I, sorrowful man, condemnéd unto death !
From you, while in me lasts my life and breath,
I will not part when this adventure's o'er,
But in your service live for evermore ;
Yea, as a man unknown your bidding tend
For ever till my heart in death shall end.
Forsake I will my royal heritage,
And, as I said, wait on you as a page,
If that ye deign to grant that in this place
I may enjoy your countenance and grace,
A little meat and drink is all I crave,
And for my sustenance will be your slave.
Minos your sire, nor any other wight,
E'er in their life, beheld me with their sight,
And no man else shall ere in me descry
That I am sprung from lineage so high ;
And to my kingly father will I send
This worthy gaoler, that hath been my friend ;
And for his guerdon straightway shall he be
One of the greatest men in my countree.
And if I durst say so, my lady bright,
I am a king's son and likewise a knight,
And would to God, if so that it might be,
We were in my own father's land, all three ;
And I with you to bear you company ;
Then would ye see if that I thereof lie.
Again I proffer you in lowly guise,
To be your page and live beneath your eyes,
Serving you lowly in whatever place ;
And pray to Mars to give me such a grace
That may a shameful death upon me fall
And death and poverty to my dear friends all ;
And that my spirit through the night may go
After my death, and wander to and fro,

If I should ever earn a traitor's name,
And bring upon my knighthood grief and shame.

A seemly knight was Theseus to see,
And young, his age was twenty years and three ;
And whosoe'er had seen his comely face,
He would have wept at his distressful case.
Then Ariadne answered in this wise
To his request, while tears fell from her eyes :—

A King's son art thou, and a knight (quoth she),
To be my servant is so low degree !
God shield me, for the shame of women all,
That on me such a sorrow should befall,
And send you grace, and strength of heart alsó,
Knight-like to guard yourself and slay your foe :
And grant hereafter that I may you find,
To me, and to my sister here, so kind,
That I repent not that I saved your life.
Yet it were better I should be your wife,
Since that you be as gently born as I,
And have a kingdom of your own fast by,
Than that I suffered knightly blood to wait,
And be my page to swell my father's state,—
This would not profit me, nor your friends dear,
That you should wait upon a lady here—
But what will not man do when urged by fear ?—
No ! let us rather altogether go,
You, and eke I, my gentle sister too,
And let her to some noble lord be wed :
This is what I propose ; (the lady said)
Now swear it here, on all that can be sworn.

O, lady mine, (quoth he) or else all torn
May I be with the Minotaur to-morrow,
And have here of my heart its blood and sorrow,
If that ye will : had I a knife or spear,
Forth would I let it gush, and thereon swear

By red-eyed Mars, chief god of my belief,
So may I live, nor fail by foe or grief,—
To-morrow with the monster will I fight ;
So shall your faith my promise then requite ;
For I would never from my dungeon flee
Till that you should my proofs of true love see.
For, O, believe the gentle words I say,
That I have loved you long full many a day ;
Tho' little wist thou, in my own countree ;
And evermost have I desired to see
You above every other creature fair.
Upon my truth I you assure, and swear,
These seven years your servant I have been :—
Now am I yours, and also you are mine ;
Of Athens Duchess, and my dear heart's queen !

The lady at his ardour smiled serene,
And at his hearty words, and at his cheer;
And to her sister said as ye shall hear.

Oh, gentle sister mine ! dear heart ! (quoth she)
Now are we duchesses of high degree,
And trothed to sceptred rulers of Athénes,
And both hereafter likely to be queens,
And saved from shameful death a monarch's son,
May ever gentle woman thus be won—
To save a gentle man, and show her might
In honest causes, that is, in the right :
And well I deem no tongue can ever blame
Our deeds, nor give to us an evil name.
But of this tale I must short matter make,
And therefore Theseus soon his leave did take,
And every point arranged performed indeed.
As ye have in this story heard me read.

The sword and clew, the things that I have said,
Were by the gaoler in the prison laid,
There where the Minotaur was wallowing,
Close to the door, and by the entering ;
And Theseus is led unto his doom,
And to the monster's dwelling is he come.
Then, by the teaching of the lady bright,
He overcame the beast in dreadful fight ;
And out he cometh by the clew again,
Full secretly, when he the beast has slain.
And the old gaoler taketh then a barge,
And filled it with his lady's treasure large,
And took her thence, and eke her sister free :
And now the gaoler, and with him all three,
Are stole away out of the land by night,
And to a foreign shore they took their flight,
Where Theseus had a friend, who bade
him rest,
And there they sang, and feasted on
the best.
Then for a noble barge he sent anon ;
The crew his country-folks were every
one ;
And Theseus took his leave, and home
sailed he,
Till coming to an isle in the wild
sea,
Where living creatures therein dwell-
eth none
Save wild beasts, and of them full
many a one,
He made his ship towards this island
steer,
And there a summer's day he had his
cheer.

But now, to tell you in the shortest way,
As Ariadne fast in slumber lay,

Because her sister fairer was than she,
By the hand Theseus took her silently,
Unto his rocking ship, and bade the crew
Across the deep their traitorous flight pursue,
And homeward to his country sailed full fast,
With twenty devils driving in the blast,—
And found his father drowned in the salt sea.
False lover ! may thy poison work on thee.

And now for Ariadne let us weep,
Who for her very weariness doth sleep.
Full woefully will she from slumbers wake :
Alas ! for her my heart with ruth doth ache.
Right in the dawning of the day she woke,
And groping in the bed began to look,
But Theseus saw not ; then aloud she said,
Alas ! alas ! that ever I was made !
I am forsaken ;—and her hair she rent,
And to the beach in barefoot haste she went,
And cried aloud, O Theseus ! my heart's dear,
Where art thou, that I cannot find thee here ?
Full soon shall I by these wild beasts be slain !
The hollow rocks now answered her again.
No man she saw, and yet bright shone the moon,
When high upon a rock she clambered soon,
And saw his barge a-sailing on the sea !
Cold turned her heart, and thus in grief said she ;
Kinder than thou I find the beasts so wild !
Hath he not sinned that hath her thus beguiled ?
Again she cried, O, turn for ruth and sin,
Thy barge hath not got all its people in.
Her kerchief on a pole then sticketh she,
High in the air, that he the sign must see,
Remembering him that she was left behind,
And turn again his once-loved wife to find.
But all for nought ; his path-way is far gone,
And down she fell and swoonéd on a stone ;

But after a time she rose, and kissed with care
His footmarks on the sand which she found there,
And to her bed in accents mild and low,
Thou bed, (quoth she) that hath receivéd two,
Answer thou shalt for two, and not for one—
Where is the greater part, and whither gone ?
Alas ! what shall I, wretched wight, become ?
For tho' it chance a boat should hither come,
Home to my country dare I never go,
Myself I cannot counsel in my woe.

What should I more of her complaining tell,
It were a heavy thing whereon to dwell ;
In her epistle Ovid telleth all :
But shortly to the end my words shall fall.
The thronéd gods on her their pity took,
And in the sign of Taurus, if you look,
You may behold her starry crown shine clear.
Now will I speak no more of sorrow here ;
But thus this traitorous lover did beguile
A gentle heart ; the devil requite his wile.

THOMAS POWELL.

SOME OF THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

In or about the year 1382, it happened that a party of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury assembled at the Tabard Inn in Southwark. It was a common thing in those days for such pilgrimages to take place, and all sorts and conditions of men joined in them, and rode together in comradeship on the journey, which sometimes took several days.

The group which assembled at the Tabard Inn included a knight who was a gentleman of position, with his son and attendant, a doctor of medicine, a lawyer, a poor clergyman, a prioress who was also a great lady, a monk, a friar, and with these many people of quite humble rank, such as a carpenter, a cook, a ploughman, and a sailor.

The poet Chaucer supposes himself to have formed one of this company, and tells how he was already at the inn prepared to start on the pilgrimage when the others arrived there. We will try to give the account of what took place in words very much like those which the poet uses himself in his Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, but without the rhythm of his verses.

It was the season when the sweet showers of April had driven away the drought of March and refreshed all the powers of Nature ; the soft western breeze now stirred the woodland, and the air was filled with the melody of birds. It was just the time to make people think of starting on pilgrimages, and especially in

England did they wend from all parts to the shrine of the holy saint and martyr, St. Thomas of Canterbury.

It befell as I (Chaucer) lay at the Tabard Inn at Southwark, ready to start on my own pilgrimage to Canterbury, there arrived one evening at that hostelry a company of twenty-nine persons of various degree who, bound on the same journey, had fallen into pleasant fellowship by the way.

Fortunately there was plenty of accommodation at the inn, for the rooms were large, and there were also good stables, so every one was comfortably lodged there for the night.

I myself soon made friends with the company, and by sunset we were on very good terms, and I had arranged to rise early the next morning and start with them for Canterbury.

And now I must tell you how we spent that evening at the Tabard Inn.

The worthy landlord of the inn made great cheer for us, and before long we all sat down to a most excellent supper. The food was of the best, and it was served with good strong wine ; and our host might have been the marshal in a great house, so well did he arrange and provide for his guests. He was a big man with bright eyes, and he was bold of speech, intelligent, and well educated. There is no better citizen in the whole of Cheapside, I warrant ; moreover, he was of a very merry disposition, and supper ended and the bill paid, he began to make fun and to talk of many amusing things. After a time he addressed us in this manner :—

" Now, my masters, you have truly been right wel-

come to me here, for of a truth never saw I so merry a company assembled together before.

" Fain am I to add to your amusement if I but know how; and as a matter of fact, I have just bethought me of a plan to please you, and one which shall cost you nothing. You go to Canterbury, God speed you, and well I wot you will try as you go on your way to think of subjects of discourse and amusement. For truly it is poor fun to ride by the way dumb as a stone. Therefore, as I said, I would think of a plan to cause diversion to you on the road.

" Now if you would like to hearken to my idea, and allow me to decide on it, I beg you to hold up your hands."

We did not take much time to consider this. One and all agreed that it was not a matter for much discussion, and that it were best to let our host have his way.

" Well, then, my masters," he said, " listen to me, and I beg you not to ridicule my plan. To come to the point, I propose that as you ride to Canterbury you shall each of you beguile the way for the rest by telling a tale of adventure that has either befallen yourself, or that you have heard tell as having befallen to others. Each of you shall in turn tell one tale on the way to Canterbury and one on your way back, and when you return here, a supper shall be given to the one who has told the best and most entertaining story.

" I myself will gladly ride with you at my own expense, and be the director and guide of the pastime; and if any one disputes my orders he shall pay all the expenses of the journey for us all. Now if you agree to this, let us consider it settled without more ado, and I will get me in readiness for the early start on the morrow."

The plan of the host was accepted by us all, and we prayed him to be the judge as to the stories and

to arrange the whole matter, promising to be ruled by him in all things concerned.

Thereupon more wine was called for, and having refreshed ourselves with the same, we retired early to rest.

The next morning our host was astir at daybreak, marshalling us all together, and forth we soon started in a flock. We rode at a foot-pace until we came to a watering-place about two miles on our way, and there our host stopped his horse and said :—

" Now, my masters, listen, if you please. You remember your agreement, and if you are still in the same mind as last night, let us see who shall tell the first story. Remember that whoever disputes my orders has to pay for the whole journey. Let lots be drawn, and the one who draws the shortest shall begin. Now come near, my Lady Prioress ; and you, Sir Clerk, don't be so shamefaced ! Let every one of you take his turn."

The lots were drawn, and it fell to the Knight to tell the first story ; and every one was full glad of the same, both because their turn was thus delayed, and also they reckoned, and rightly, as it chanced, that the story told by the Knight would be well worth hearing.

As for the Knight himself, when this good man saw that the first turn had fallen to him, he was too sensible not to show himself ready to keep his share of the compact.

" Since I am to begin the game, well and good," he said. " Now let us start, and as we go on our way listen to the story I shall tell."

With this we all set forth once more, and the Knight with a right and merry cheer forthwith began his tale.

The story told by the Knight was, as befitted the teller, one of knightly deeds, of prowess in the field, of love and of passionate service to its claims. In his own youth he had himself been filled with a great love of warfare and the desire for renown which accompanies it. In many countries of Europe had he fought, and in far-off Turkey he had made himself both dreaded and admired, while in Egypt he had been one of the victorious army when Alexandria was taken. In Algiers as well as in Moorish Spain he had won fame by his military exploits, and in fact he had distinguished himself in no less than fifteen battles, and also fought in three single combats with success. Altogether he was a most interesting personage. He had travelled in Palestine and fought with the Crusaders for the Holy Sepulchre, and he had been at many foreign courts and mixed with many different people, so that he had the wide view of life which travel alone can give. But through all his travels and many adventures he retained the same strong, simple character. Though in the midst of the fight none was fiercer than he, when the battle was over he was as gentle as though he had never engaged in warfare. He was as wise, too, as he was worthy, while his conversation was always well chosen and free from coarseness. And above all, he loved " truth and honour, freedom and courtesy." In fact, as Chaucer tells us, he was " a very perfect, gentle knight," possessing all the virtues which a true knight should have.

He was mounted on a horse that was thoroughly good but not showy, and he wore a fustian doublet which bore rusty marks from the good coat of mail which he had but lately worn over it. For he had but just returned from a journey when he started on the pilgrimage. Everything about him was plain and good and true, free from ostentation and display, as should always be the case with a true gentleman.

In attendance on the Knight was his son, a youth of twenty, who acted as his squire. A brave and jocund youth was he, with magnificently curled locks and a doublet as gay with embroidery as a spring meadow with flowers ; and such a bright and happy spirit did he possess that as he went on his way he was for ever singing or playing on the flute. He was as fresh as is the month of May. Withal he was most accomplished, for he could compose his own songs and verses, and he drew with skill, and was excellent both at horsemanship and at dancing. With these many attainments he was no mere carpet-knight, for he inherited his father's gifts for battle, and had borne himself well even at this early age in chivalrous encounters in Flanders and Picardy, fired thereto by desire to win favour in his lady's eyes. All his talents and success, however, had not spoiled the young squire nor turned his head. He was still dutiful and courteous to his elders, and humble in his deportment to them. At his father's table he carved for him as an inferior would do, and thought it no disgrace to wait on him as a servant.

Besides the young squire, the Knight was accompanied by one yeoman, but had no other servants in attendance. The yeoman must have been a very picturesque figure in the little group, for he was clad in a coat and hood of green, and under his belt he carried a sheaf of arrows with peacock feathers. Upon one arm he bore a bow, and on the other a bracer, or guard for the arm used in archery. He also carried a sword and a buckler, and a sharp-pointed dagger. Besides these he had a horn fastened across his shoulders with a green strap, and on his breast shone a silver image of St. Christopher, the guardian saint of travellers.

Such was the Knight's servant or yeoman, and, as we see, he was equipped and ready to take his part in a fray as a fighter, though his green costume, his bow

and arrows and horn, proclaimed him to be a forester by calling, while his close-cropped head and his tanned face also seemed to show his position and calling, just as the young squire's elaborately curled locks showed his social standing.

We have now some acquaintance with the Knight and his attendants, and will be able therefore the better to enjoy the story with which he entertained the company. But first you may be further interested in Chaucer's own description of the Knight, the Squire, and the Yeoman, modernized or altered a little so that you can understand it more clearly.

THE KNIGHT, THE SQUIRE, AND THE YEOMAN

WHEN that sweet April showers with downward shoot
The drought of March have pierced unto the root,
And bathéd every vein with liquid power,
Whose virtue rare engendereth the flower ;
When Zephyrus also with his fragrant breath
Inspiréd hath in every grove and heath
The tender shoots of green, and the young sun
Hath in the Ram one half his journey run,
And small birds in the trees make melody,
That sleep and dream all night with open eye ;
So nature stirs all energies and ages
That folks are bent to go on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to wander thro' strange strands,
To sing the holy mass in sundry lands :
And more especially, from each shire's end
Of England, they to Canterbury wend,
The holy blissful martyr for to seek,
Who hath upheld them when that they were weak.
  It fell, within that season on a day
In Southwark, at the Tabard as I lay,
Ready to wend upon my pilgrim route
To Canterbury, with a heart devout,
At night was come into that hostelry
Well nine-and-twenty in a company,
Of sundry folk who thus had chanced to fall
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all,
That now to Canterbury town would ride.
The chambers and the stables they were wide

And all of us refreshed, and of the best.
And shortly when the sun was gone to rest,
So had I spoken with them every one,
That I was of their fellowship anon,
And made them promise early for to rise
To take our way there, as I you apprize.
But ne'ertheless, while I have time and space,
Ere that I further in this story pace,
Methinks it were accordant with good sense
To tell you the condition and pretence
Of each of them, so as it seemed to me ;
And which they were—of what kind, and degree ;
And eke in what array that they were in :
And at a knight, then, will I first begin.

A KNIGHT there was, and that a worthy man,
Who from the hour on which he first began
To ride out, vowed himself to chivalry,
Honour and truth, freedom and courtesy.
In his lord's war right worthy had he shone,
And thereto ridden—none had further gone,
In Christian, and in Heathen land, no less ;
And ever honoured for his worthiness.
At Alexandria was he when 'twas won.
Full oft the wassail board he had begun,
Above the bravest warriors out of Prusse ;
In Lithuania had he served, and Russe ;
No Christian man so oft of his degree.
At Algeciras, in Granada, he
Had joined the siege ; and ridden in Belmarie :
At Layas was he, and at Satalie
When they were won ; and, borne on the Great Sea,
At many a noble fight of ships was he.
In mortal battles had he been fifteen,
And fought for our true faith, at Tramissene,
In the lists thrice—and always slain his foe.
And this same worthy Knight had been alsó

In Anatolia sometime with a lord,
Fighting against the foes of God his word ;
And evermore he won a sovereign prize.
Though thus at all times honoured, he was wise,
And of his port as meek as is a maid.
He never yet a word discourteous said
In all his life to any mortal wight :
He was a very perfect gentle knight.
But for to tell you of his staid array,—
His horse was good, albeit he was not gay.
He wore a fustian cassock, short and plain,
All smutched with rust from coat of mail, and rain.
For he was late returned ; and he was sage,
And cared for nought but his good pilgrimage.

His son, a young SQUIRE, with him there I saw ;
A lover and a lusty bachelor ;
With locks crisp curled, as they'd been laid in press :
Of twenty years of age he was, I guess.
He was in stature of the common length,
With wondrous nimbleness, and great of strength :
And he had been in expeditions three,
In Flanders, Artois, and in Picardy ;
And borne him well, tho' in so little space,
In hope to stand fair in his lady's grace.
Embroidered was he, as it were a mead
All crowded with fresh flowers, white and red.
Singing he was, or fluting all the day :
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his gown, with sleeves right long and wide
Well could he sit his horse, and fairly ride.
He could make songs, and letters well endite,
Joust and eke dance, and portraits paint, and write.
His amorous ditties nightly filled the vale ;
He slept no more than doth the nightingale.
Courteous he was, modest and serviceable,
And carved before his father at the table.

A YEOMAN had he ; and no page beside :
It pleased him, on this journey, thus to ride ;
And he was clad in coat and hood of green.
A sheaf of peacock arrows, bright and keen
Under his belt he bare full thriftily :
Well could he dress his tackle yeomanly ;
His arrows droopéd not with feathers low ;
And in his hand he bare a mighty bow.
His head was like a nut, with visage brown.
Of wood-craft all the ways to him were known.
An arm-brace wore he that was rich and broad,
And by his side a buckler and a sword ;
While on the other side a dagger rare
Well sheathed was hung, and on his breast he bare
A large St. Christopher of silver sheen.
A horn he had ; the baldric was of green.
A forester was he truly, as I guess.

R. H. HORNE.

THE KNIGHT'S TALE OF PALAMON AND ARCITE

Part I

In days gone by there reigned in Athens a brave and noble duke named Theseus. Such a great warrior was he that at that time there was none greater under the sun. Many a rich country did he conquer by his courage and wisdom in warfare and add to his dominions of Athens, and amongst them was the kingdom of Scythia, inhabited by a race of women warriors called Amazons. Great was the battle fought by the Athenians under Theseus against these fierce women; but all that chanced on the field belongs not of right to this story. Suffice it to say that the Amazons were completely defeated and their capital taken, and that Theseus lost his heart to their queen Hippolyta, and wedded her amid great rejoicings.

The war now being ended, Theseus set off on his homeward journey, accompanied by his wife Hippolyta and by her younger sister, a maiden of great beauty, named Emily, to whom he was giving the shelter and protection of his Court, and the consolation of her sister's society.

The duke was fated, however, to be denied the im-

mediate enjoyment of the peace of his own home and the company of his bride, for as he approached the town of Athens in all the pride of conquest and with the magnificence of array suitable to the occasion, a melancholy spectacle presented itself to his gaze. To his astonishment and dismay, on either side of the highway through which he rode in triumph, there knelt two rows of ladies clad in the deepest black, and uttering the most pitiful sounds of grief.

Very different indeed was such a spectacle from anything the duke could have expected on his home-coming, and he drew rein amidst these ladies to inquire the cause of the display of mourning which seemed so much out of keeping with the occasion.

"Who are you," he asked, "who at my home-coming thus disturb the festival? Is it envy of my honours that causeth you thus to weep and lament, or hath some one insulted or offended you? If so, tell me, that I may make amends if possible; and tell me also the reason of your being thus all clothed in black."

The eldest lady of the number was chosen to speak for the rest, and when with an effort she had sufficiently composed herself to do so, she thus made reply:—

"My good lord, to whom Fortune hath given victory and conquest, it is not your glory or honour which grieveth us. We seek mercy and help, for we are in sore distress. Of a truth, sir, amongst us there is none who hath not been a queen or a duchess, though now, as you see, we are but outcasts. I myself, who now weep before you, was formerly wife to King Capaneus, who died, lack-a-day, at Thebes, and all the rest who here bewail their fate lost their husbands in

that same unlucky town when it was besieged by the tyrant Creon, who now reigns there; and out of evil and malice this same Creon refuses honourable burial to our dead, who, as a crowning insult, are left lying in a heap for the dogs to devour."

At these words the other ladies chimed in with tearful entreaties to Theseus to have pity on them.

The noble heart of Theseus was profoundly touched by the sad story he had heard, and at the sight of the ladies' bitter grief, and a burning indignation at Creon's unknightly and unchivalrous conduct seized upon him. He sprang from his charger and tried to comfort them with words of pity, and moreover he assured them that not a day should be lost in seeking to punish Creon for the way in which he had treated them. Then straightway he ordered the banners to be unfurled, and his host to accompany him, and without entering Athens at all, he rode straight for Thebes, sending the queen and Emily into his own city to dwell there in peace until his return.

So Theseus rode forth once more in battle array, his great white banner with its painting of Mars, the God of War, waving over his head, with a pennon of beaten gold glittering beside it. And in a field outside Thebes he met the tyrant Creon and slew him in fair fight, and then assaulted and took the town, tearing down the walls. The bodies of the slain were at once restored to the sorrowing women, who had them burnt with solemn funeral rites and great lamentation.

Now while Theseus rested on the field after the battle, his followers searched among the slain for armour or accoutrements which might be worth securing as booty, and it so befell that amidst the heaps of dead they came across two young knights lying close together, wearing exactly similar armour, and both bleeding so profusely from many wounds that it seemed as if death were very near to them. From the arms they bore it was seen that they were two

cousins, named Arcite and Palamon, the sons of two sisters belonging to the family of Creon. The searchers gently removed the two young men from where they lay, and brought them to the tent of Theseus, who decreed that they should be taken to Athens and placed in perpetual imprisonment, and that no ransom, however heavy, should be accepted for them.

Thus it befell that while Theseus on his return to Athens was celebrating his conquest with much joyful festivity, in a strong tower of the same palace where he reigned in pride and honour the two young Theban knights lay languishing, with no hope of release from captivity.

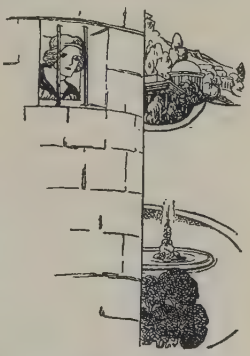
One sad year after another passed for Palamon and Arcite, until at length a certain May morning brought about events which entirely changed the current of their lives.

It will be remembered that when Theseus brought his wife Hippolyta home with him from Scythia, she was accompanied by her young sister Emily. This princess, who had now grown into a most beautiful maiden, rose betimes on this bright May morning, tempted by the sweet freshness of the dawn, and in a garden adjoining her apartments of the palace began to cull garlands of pink and white blossoms to place on her head. Fair and fresh was the maid as the sweet May morning itself. Her lovely complexion vied with the pink and white blossoms in colouring, her golden hair fell in a long neat plait far below her waist ; she was as slim and graceful as a lily on its stem, and as she wandered to and fro in the garden gathering the flowers for her garland, a song of angelic sweetness rose from her lips.

Now the wall of this garden in which Emily walked enjoying the sweetness of the spring morning adjoined the battlements of that same tower where Palamon and Arcite pined in captivity, and it chanced that on this particular morning Palamon had sought

a room at the top of the tower where he had prevailed upon the gaoler to allow him to go sometimes in order to get more air and exercise than his prison could afford. To and fro paced the wretched young man bewailing the hard fate which kept him thus a prisoner, while outside all the world rejoiced in the bright May sunshine.

"Alas, that ever I was born!" was the cry of despair which he repeated over and over again as he paced up and down the chamber. Suddenly, however, he stopped short in the middle of his lamentation, and so startling a cry broke from his lips that Arcite heard it and rushed with amazement to his side.



There was a small square window in the chamber, barred with thick iron, but leaving space enough between the bars to give a glimpse of the noble city of Athens in the distance, and closer at hand, of the green boughs and shady walks of Emily's garden; and through this opening Palamon had happened to gaze just at the moment when Emily in all her fresh beauty could be seen below gathering the May blossoms to crown her golden hair, and singing her soft happy song. At the sight of her a great change came over Palamon's feelings. The narrow prison, the miserable fate which bound him there, all his past and present sufferings, were forgotten. His heart was filled with a great and passionate love for the fair Emily, and the joy of beholding this vision of the maiden among the flowers seemed to wipe out everything else from his mind.

From that day the whole world was changed for

him, as it always is for every one who has once known a great and deep love.

When Arcite reached his cousin's side he was distressed at his pallor, for Palamon was overcome by emotion and by the mingling of joy which his love gave him with the pain of feeling that the lady he adored was separated so completely from him. Arcite, who knew nothing of all that had occurred in this short time, thought that Palamon was overcome by the thoughts of his captivity, and he endeavoured to persuade him to bear his trials more patiently.

"Why art thou of so deadly a pallor?" he said. "For God's sake, bear our imprisonment with patience since there is no escape from it. We were certainly born under an unlucky star, but we must endure what fate has ordered."

These words were of course wasted on Palamon, who proceeded to explain to Arcite the cause of his excitement.

"Cousin, thou hast a vain imagination," he said. "It was not this prison which caused me to cry out, but a very different cause. I was struck right to my heart by a sudden wound. The fairness of the lady whom, if you look, you will see in the garden below was in truth the cause of my cry, though whether she be a woman or a goddess in truth I hardly know."

Whereupon Arcite took his turn at the window, and when he saw Emily, whose beauty had so impressed Palamon, he too fell a victim to her beauty, and was at once as much in love with her as his fellow-prisoner.

With a deep sigh and in piteous accents he exclaimed,—

"I too am struck to the heart by the sight of this fresh beauty wandering among the blossoms. Unless I can gain her favour, or at least attain to her presence, I am as one who is already dead. There is no more to be said."

At this unexpected turn of events, Palamon gazed at his cousin in the greatest distress.

"Now tell me," he gasped, "whether you are speaking in jest or in earnest."

"In earnest, by my faith," said Arcite.

At this Palamon's brow grew dark with wrath and distress.

"How now!" he cried. "Wouldst thou act the part of a false traitor? Have we not sworn to be true friends and brothers to each other, and never to cross one another in love? and now wouldst thou seek to deprive me of my lady, whom I shall love and serve until death? Did I not love her first and tell thee of my love, and art thou not bound, as my brother and as a true knight, to help me, if it lies in thy power?"

"Nay," cried Arcite hotly; "it is thyself that is false rather than I! Thou wert not sure if she were mortal or goddess, and simply worshipped her from afar, while I loved her at once as a woman whom I vowed to serve truly as a knight, and told thee of this at once. Moreover, even if thy love were first, love cannot be bound by rules, and I should love her all the same. Besides, as we are both condemned to imprisonment for life, and can have no chance of approaching her, there is no reason why we should not each love her. Love her too, therefore, if you wish; I shall continue to love her all the same."

From that day there was much strife between the knights who had hitherto been such close and devoted friends, and whose love for Emily was a constant cause of contention between them, hopeless though it would seem that their passion was.

Now the two young men were not destined to spend the whole of their lives in prison, though at the moment there seemed no hope of anything else, and for one of them release was already drawing near.

It chanced that there came on a visit to Athens a worthy duke named Perotheus, who had been the

playmate of Theseus in youth and his much-loved friend ever since. So close indeed was the friendship between these two that a later story tells how when one of them died, the other went even into the place of departed spirits to seek him.

Now Perotheus also loved Arcite, whom he had known in Thebes, and he pleaded with Theseus on his behalf with such success that the duke promised not only to release the young knight, but to do so without ransom. One condition only did he make in doing so, and this was that Arcite must never enter Athenian dominions again, on pain of losing his head if he did so. Except for this one condition he was free to go anywhere he liked; but the duke little guessed the reason by which this condition would make freedom to Arcite worse than captivity. The news of his release, which before he had seen Emily would have filled him with rejoicing, was received by him now with bitter grief. It seemed to him that perpetual imprisonment with the chance of seeing his lady, though but from afar, would be a happier fate than freedom far away from her.

"Alas, that ever I was born!" he moaned. "Alas, that I ever knew Perotheus! Gladly would I stay in prison for the sake of but a distant sight of her whom I love."

It now seemed to him in his distress that the fate of Palamon, who was to remain alone in prison, was infinitely to be preferred to his own.

"Thine is the victory, dear cousin," he said to him. "While I go forth as a miserable exile, it is for thee to dwell blissfully in prison—in prison, said I? Nay, rather should I have said in Paradise. Kindly hath Fortune treated thee, for thou hast at least a sight of Emily, while I am afar. And who knows, since thou art a good and brave knight, but that the chances of Fate may some day give thee her love? But for me who am exiled, what possible hope of this can

there be? For me there is no hope or comfort possible from earth, air, fire, or water. Well might I die in my distress. Farewell, my life, my joy, my gladness!"

Thus did Arcite make a bitter complaint against his lot; but before long he began to reason philosophically as was his wont.

For now, so he assured himself, he saw how vain were murmurings against what God decrees for us, since the very thing we think we most desire proves to be totally unacceptable when it comes, while what we think unendurable proves to be in reality the best for us. Did he not himself at one time long most ardently for that release which he now deplored? Man indeed prays in the dark, not knowing what is for his own true good, and in seeking his own happiness full often goes quite astray from it.

Nevertheless Arcite left his prison with a heavy heart, bewailing the lot which drew him far away from the fair Emily.

Palamon, on the other hand, bewailed even more the fate which kept him a prisoner in Athens, and bitter envy of his cousin's release assailed him. The tower echoed to his complaints, and the very rings of the iron chains which bound his feet grew rusty with his tears; and as he wept and moaned he pictured Arcite enjoying the freedom denied to himself. It seemed to the unhappy young man in his desolation that his friend would have little thought to spare for him left behind in his misery; and to add to his sufferings he remembered that Arcite, now that he was free, was clever enough and brave enough to raise an army to lead against Athens, and that, if victorious, he might make a treaty with the conquered city,

containing as a condition that Emily should be his wife.

At this thought fierce jealousy of Arcite's possible better fortune seized Palamon, and added further pangs to his torments; and more than ever did he bemoan the fate which kept him a helpless prisoner, and denied to him even the faintest hope of winning Emily.

It would be hard indeed to say which of the two knights, Palamon or Arcite, was the more to be pitied.

The one was fast bound in prison, with no hope of release certainly, but he was at least able at times to catch glimpses of the lady of his affection; while as for the other, though free to roam at will outside Athenian territory, all hope of seeing his lady even from a distance seemed to be evermore denied to him. As is the way in life, each one thought his own particular lot the hardest to bear.

Part II

We will now leave Palamon in his dungeon and follow the adventures of Arcite after he left Athens.

The knight had hastened back to his native town of Thebes, but the home-coming which would have been so joyful under other circumstances was fraught to him with nothing but pain by the memory of all he had left behind. The thought that he should never more see the lady of his love filled him with such grief that he could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep. He grew so lean and pallid and hollow-eyed that he was scarcely to be recognized, while his low spirits altered his manner and voice no less than they did his appearance. In short, in every way he seemed quite a different man from the brave, handsome young knight of former days.

One night, when he had been in Thebes for about two years, as Arcite lay tossing on his bed in restless sleep, he had a strange dream. It seemed to him in this dream that the god Mercury appeared to him, wearing a winged cap on his bright brow, and bearing in his hand the famous wand Caduceus with which he once put to sleep the hundred-eyed monster Argus. Then he thought he saw the god stand near to him with an expression of gentle benignity on his face, and heard him say to him these words :—

> " To Athens shalt thou wend,
> For there 'tis destined that thy life shall end."

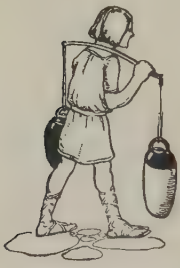
Hereupon Arcite woke with a start, but with the impression of the dream so strongly upon him that he thereupon resolved to follow the god's advice, and even at the risk of his life to go back to Athens. Death in the presence of Emily, so he reasoned, would at least be a happier fate than that of living apart from her.

At this point in his meditations, Arcite happened to see his face reflected in a mirror, and the sight of his altered and wasted features caused the sudden idea to strike him that he might pass unrecognized amongst those who had not seen him since he left Athens. Whereupon a plan hastily took shape in his brain, by which he might let himself out for hire in Athens as a common labourer, and thus, completely disguised and safe from discovery, might enjoy the bliss of seeing Emily daily.

This idea no sooner occurred to Arcite than he hastened to put it into execution. He clad himself as a common labourer, and taking with him his trusted squire, also disguised, he set out for Athens by the nearest way.

Arrived at the city, Arcite and his squire took up their position at the gate of the palace, and offered

themselves for hire to perform any rough, hard work required to be done. By a fortunate chance the chamberlain who managed the special household of the Princess Emily gave him an opportunity to enter into conversation with him, and seeing that Arcite was eager and willing for work, and that in spite of his lean appearance he had a strong and powerful frame, he engaged him as an attendant on the fair Emily herself. He took the name of Philostrate, and his duties were to hew wood for the fires, to carry water for use in the household, and make himself generally useful in a variety of ways.



Now although these tasks appointed to Arcite were very humble, the young knight performed them in such a manner that his renown spread through the Court. Every one wondered at his gentleness and courtesy, and it soon became a matter of common talk that a man of so much virtue as he displayed was worthy of a better calling, and that it would be but a fitting tribute to his good qualities if Theseus were to raise him to higher rank.

In course of time this took place, for Theseus was so struck by all he heard of Arcite that he gave him a post near his own person, making him one of his squires, and paid him a high salary.

Arcite also received his own rentals from Thebes privately, but so discreetly and well did he spend the money that his prosperity excited no wonder or curiosity.

For three years did he continue to hold the post given to him by Theseus, and during that time steered his course so well both in peace and war that the duke learnt to love and trust him better than any man about the Court.

Thus for Arcite did Fortune seem to smile, and he dwelt in prosperity and renown.

Far different was the fate of Palamon meanwhile. His imprisonment had now lasted for seven long years, and added to the suffering of his position was the torturing thought that no change in it could be looked for, since his sentence was for life.

At last, however, an unexpected chance of escape came to him. Friends from outside succeeded in communicating with the unhappy man. With their aid he mixed in the gaoler's wine opium and other drugs which caused profound sleep, and while the man lay unconscious of everything in a dead slumber, Palamon broke from the prison tower, and fled with all speed to the country outside the walls of Athens.

He had run some little distance when the short May night drew to a close, and as the first signs of dawn appeared in the sky, he crept cautiously into a grove, where he thought he would hide, his intention being to remain there in concealment while daylight lasted, and at night to steal forth again in the direction of Thebes. When he should have reached his native city he intended to seek the help of his friends and comrades there, and to return to Athens with an army, and the determination either to win Emily as his wife or to die in the attempt.

Now it chanced that on this same May morning, Arcite rose betimes, and, stirred by the happy song of larks and the general freshness of the morning, he leapt on his courser and rode at full gallop into the meadows, his heart burning the while with love for Emily.

When he had gone a mile or two he came to the very same grove where Palamon lay hidden behind the bushes. Very inviting did the grove appear on this fair spring morning, while the silvery drops of dew still hung from the fresh green leaves, or sparkled on the pink and white blossom of hawthorn and wild rose; and Arcite at the sight of it sprang from his horse and plunged into the thicket to gather a garland.

As he wandered down one of the woodland paths, the joy of the spring found expression in a merry song of greeting to May, and little he dreamt that his former friend and present rival in his love for Emily lay hidden within earshot all the time.

Suddenly, however, his song came to an end, and with a groan the thought of his sorrows came over him, and seating himself on the ground he gave vent to melancholy reflections.

"Alas! woe be to the day that I was born!" he cried aloud. "Have I not in my veins the royal blood of the great Cadmus who founded Thebes, and now am I not so humbled and debased as to be serving my mortal enemy submissively? Have I not exchanged my proud title of Sir Arcite for the unknown name of Philostrate? Above all, am I not the victim of hopeless love? Ah! Emily, you slay me with your glances. It is you who are the cause whereby I pine and languish. To please you how gladly would I not bear and suffer all things!" and with these words he fell into a kind of trance of grief from which he had a most unexpected awakening.

Palamon had heard all the words of Arcite from his hiding-place, and learnt from them the astonishing truth that his rival, instead of being in Thebes as he thought, had braved the chance of discovery, and was living thus in disguise at the very Court of Theseus himself. As he listened to Arcite's self-revelation, it was as though a cold sword had struck at his heart;

and when his enemy sank into silence, he sprang out from his hiding-place as pale as death, and unable any longer to control his anger.

"Now, Arcite, thou false traitor, who hath dared to love my lady Emily, thou art discovered," he cried. "Do not I perceive that thou hast deceived Duke Theseus and falsely changed thy name? Now prepare for death, for I will not permit that thou shalt live to love my lady Emily. Behold, I am Palamon, thy mortal foe, and though I have no weapon, having just escaped from prison, I have no fear—either shalt thou die or renounce thy love for Emily. Choose which thou wilt."

Arcite, who was much startled at first at the encounter, was quite cool and collected by the time that Palamon had finished his fiery speech. Swiftly drawing his sword to defend himself should Palamon attack him, he answered scornfully,—

"By Heaven! were it not that thou art mad with love and also unarmed, thou shouldst die this instant by my sword. Why, fool, remember that love is free, and I have as much right to love Emily as thyself, and I certainly shall do so in spite of thy threats. However, as I hold thee a true and worthy knight, I am ready to put the matter to the test of the sword. I here pledge my word that early to-morrow I will not fail to meet thee here secretly, and to bring full armour for thee—yea, not only that, but to give thee the choice, so that thou mayst have the best and I myself the worst. I will also bring thee food, and drink, and bedding to-night to this spot. To-morrow we will decide the matter, and shouldst thou slay me here in this wood, the right to try and win the lady will of course be thine."

In reply, Palamon accepted the conditions, and they parted.

The next morning before the sun was up, Arcite, in fulfilment of his pledge, rode out of Athens to the grove where Palamon awaited him. All alone and unattended he rode, bearing before him on his saddle the two suits of armour.

Without greeting or exchange of courtesies, the two knights armed themselves; and now a change came over both countenances as they stood face to face ready for mortal combat, and realized that for one or other his last hour drew near.

Then the conflict began, and with spears sharpened to the utmost, they set to against each other. Now Palamon might have been likened to a lion in the attack, so fierce and keen was he; but Arcite, ever the cooler of the two, more resembled the stealthy tiger in his method of fighting. Be that as it may, they both fought with zealous determination, and the blood flowed freely from many a wound as they strove together.

Now it befell by one of those curious chances which happen sometimes in life, and which serve to point to some special design on the part of Providence, that Theseus was stirred on this same May morning to ride out hunting at a much earlier hour than usual. Forth he went, soon after daybreak, in pursuit of the deer, with his hounds and huntsmen, and accompanied by the queen Hippolyta and Emily clad in green. In merry mood the company issued out of the city, and made for the very grove where Arcite and Palamon were fighting, and there Theseus came upon them in the midst of their conflict. Fiercely did they strive as wild boars in

fight; their circling blades flashed hither and thither with strokes which seemed as though they could have felled a sturdy oak; and at the sight the duke, ignorant as to who the knights were, but seeing their deadly peril, dashed between them with drawn sword in his hand.

"Hold!" cried he; "no more, lest each of you forfeit his head. By mighty Mars, he that strikes another stroke shall straightway die. Now tell me what manner of men ye be who fight without witness or umpire, thus breaking the usual laws of knightly tourney."

Then Palamon, with his usual impetuosity, thinking that everything was lost, and that death must be the penalty for both him and Arcite, told the duke the whole story. He confessed that both were guilty and deserved death, and explained who the so-called Philostrate really was, and that he himself was the escaped prisoner Palamon. He also told the duke how they both loved the Princess Emily, and had become deadly enemies in consequence, and that it was for her sake that they fought in this manner.

At this confession the duke's wrath was greatly kindled, and he vowed that both the knights should indeed suffer death as a punishment for their offence; and this sentence would no doubt have been speedily carried out had it not been for what next occurred. For, moved to pity by the sad fate of the two brave young knights whose crime was caused by love alone, the queen and Emily burst into tears of pity, and together, with the other ladies of the Court, they flung themselves on their knees before the duke, entreating him to show mercy.

At first the duke was only angered the more at this would-be interference; but beneath his wrath he possessed a kind heart and a strong sense of justice, and as the ladies wept before him, softer feelings gained on

him, and he began to look at the matter from a different point of view.

" For in truth," he argued to himself, " it is but natural for any man who is in prison to seek to escape from it if he can ; and then, too, how mighty a power is that of Love ! Why, here are these two young men, Arcite and Palamon, who, free from their prison, might have lived right royally in Thebes had they chosen, and yet in spite of this, and of the fact moreover that I am their mortal foe, and that I have but to say the word for them to be killed, they stay of their own accord here in Athens, led by Love thus to risk their lives. Indeed, how great, and yet how noble, is the folly of it ! And now, how they bleed from many a grievous wound, all for the sake of this same Love for which they can expect little other return, since she for whom they strove did not even know of their feeling for her."

Then Theseus began to recall his own early days, and remembered how he, too, had been an ardent lover in his youth, suffering all the pain of unreturned affection ; and the upshot of this, combined with the tears and entreaties of the two royal ladies, led him to pardon the knights on condition that they became his faithful friends, and should never at any time wage war against him, or molest his country in any way.

Besides this, Theseus said he was not unwilling to give Emily to either of such brave knights as wife ; but since they both desired to marry her, and this was impossible, he proposed a means of deciding the matter, and of settling once and for all the quarrel between them. He told them that they were both quite free to go wherever they chose without ransom, but at the same time they must promise to return to Athens the next year, each accompanied by one hundred knights, and there to fight a tournament, with Emily as the prize. The lists should be prepared close to the spot where they stood, and the duke

himself promised to act as umpire in the conflict between the two hundred knights.

This proposal filled both Arcite and Palamon with feelings of untold joy, for now the great subject of their contention should be decided in the true and knightly fashion, and each one prized beyond anything that could have been offered to him the chance that was now afforded of winning Emily as his wife. Overcome with gratitude at this most unexpected boon, the knights fell on their knees before Theseus, and poured out their thanks to him ; and then, filled with hope, and with hearts at rest, they hastened to Thebes, there to collect their knights with all due care and circumspection, and to make ready for the great tournament of the following year.

Part III

While Arcite and Palamon were thus preparing for the tournament in Thebes, Theseus made great preparations in Athens. First of all he built a magnificent amphitheatre a mile in circumference. The walls were of strong stone, and all round it within rose tiers of seats for the spectators, one above the other, to the height of a hundred and eighty feet. Round this high wall, on the outer side, was a moat, and the theatre was entered by two beautiful doors of white marble, one at the east and the other at the west.

No labour or expense was spared to make the whole place as beautiful as possible. Above the gates were

two very costly chapels ; that over the eastern gate being dedicated to Venus, the goddess of love, and that over the western gate to Mars, the god of war ; and in the north wall there was one adorned with white alabaster and red coral sacred to Diana, the goddess of hunting ; and all these chapels were ornamented inside with exquisite carvings and paintings. The whole vast centre space of the amphitheatre was, of course, left open, and it was there that the tournament was to take place. It was a great undertaking to have so many elaborate preparations ready by the given time, but by the following May all was complete.

So now the great day drew near, and back to Athens came Arcite and Palamon, followed by a noble array of knights ; for all the flower of chivalry had been eager for the honour of being enrolled, so that the very pick of the knights of the day were there, and amongst the number were two kings. One of these was the brave Lycurgus, king of Thrace, and very striking was his appearance among the knights who followed Palamon. He stood full high in a great car of gold drawn by four white bulls, and all might see his great broad shoulders and his strong muscular arms, while his glowing eyes beneath their shaggy brows, and his long black beard, added to the fierceness of his aspect. Over his armour he wore a bear-skin as black as coal, and with bright yellow talons, and on his long black hair was a crown from which flashed splendid diamonds and rubies. Surrounding him were twenty huge white hounds, closely muzzled and wearing spiked collars of gold. He had in attendance no less than a hundred followers of his own, all brave, strong men and fully armed.

The other king accompanied Arcite, and was the great Emetrius of India, who on his bay-coloured horse, with its cloth of gold draperies and steel trappings, seemed like Mars himself riding to battle. His coat was bedecked with costly pearls, and his saddle

was of gold, while the cloak which hung from his shoulders sparkled with deep red rubies. On his head he wore a crown of laurel, and he carried a tame eagle on his hand. He was but twenty-five years of age, and his appearance was that of glorious youth and splendid strength. His kindling glance was like that of a lion, and his voice like the sound of a trumpet. His hair hung in golden curls, which seemed to glitter in the sun, his eyes were bright orange in colour, and his complexion fresh and blooming. He had a high nose and full, round lips. Behind him came a hundred of his lords, all clad in rich array, and on each side of him as he rode ran tame lions and leopards.

The whole procession arrived at Athens early in the morning, and those who took part in it were given a right lordly welcome there by Theseus himself. A great feast was held in their honour, and costly gifts were given to the guests, after which there was much music and dancing, and pleasant intercourse with the fair ladies of the Court. And when night came, suitable lodging was given to all the strangers, each according to his rank and degree.

The next morning Palamon awoke two hours before dawn, to hear the blithe song of the larks in his ears. At the sound he sprang up with a song in his heart as full of joy and good cheer as that of the bird, and having donned his clothes, he crept quietly to the temple of Venus, at the entrance to the theatre, to entreat her aid in the coming conflict, since she was the goddess who was held specially to favour lovers.

All he asked, he said, was to win Emily. This he prayed the goddess to help him to accomplish, whether by success in the battle or in any other way. If this were not to be, then he asked for no better fate than that Arcite's spear should end his life, since without Emily he cared no longer to live.

Having thus made his prayer to Venus, Palamon offered incense at her shrine, and waited eagerly to see if any sign were given him in reply; and as he did so it seemed to him that the statue of Venus suddenly moved. Now this appeared to him to show that the goddess had heard, and would answer his prayer; and well content and filled with hope, he went home.

A little later, as the sun rose, Emily also rose, and taking her ladies with her went to the temple of Diana to perform sacrificial rites, and offer up a prayer to the goddess who was the special protectress of maidens. They bore with them raiment and horns filled with honey, and having offered these to the goddess, Emily bathed herself, and with a garland of young oak leaves on her long, flowing hair, she fed the altar fires and thus addressed Diana:—

"O goddess of the green forest and patroness of maidens, I pray thee do not be wroth with me, for well thou knowest that I do not wish to wed any man, but desire to remain a maiden, free to hunt the hart and deer, and to roam in the wild woodlands. Now help me, goddess, for this favour alone I ask, that the affection of these two knights for me, Palamon and Arcite, who seem to love me so greatly, be turned from me, and peace and friendship ensue between them. But if this favour be denied to me, and I must needs wed one or the other, then grant that I be bestowed upon the one whose love for me is greater."

Now while Emily made this prayer, the two fires on the altar had burnt clear, but now she saw what

seemed to her a sign of doubt as to her petition being answered, for suddenly one of the fires burnt down as though it were going out and then revived ; but as it did so, the other sank with a whistling sound and died out, as if water had been thrown on it, while, to her horror and dismay, what appeared to be drops of blood slowly oozed from the extinguished brand. So overcome with dread was poor Emily at this sight that she began to cry ; but as she did so, behold ! the goddess Diana herself appeared before her astonished gaze, habited as a huntress, and bearing a bow in her right hand.

"Daughter," spake the goddess, "cease from grief. It is ordained already by the gods that thou shalt wed one of these two knights who have suffered such pain on thy behalf, but which of the two I may not tell. Farewell, for here I must not stay. The fires that burn here on my altar shall signify to thee the course of thy love."

And with these words the arrows in Diana's quiver clattered and rang, and before the astonished Emily could reply she had vanished again from her gaze. Sorely puzzled, but trusting to the protection of the goddess, Emily left the temple, and returned by the nearest way to the palace.

Soon after this Arcite, in his turn, went to make his sacrifice at a sacred temple, and the one he chose was that of Mars, the god of war, for fiercely though he loved Emily, Arcite was, above all, a warrior. Very fervently did he pray to the god to help and sustain him, so that he might be victor in the fight, and he vowed that should this be the case, he would keep the

sacred fire ever alight on the altar of Mars, and cut off as a votive-offering his long hair and beard which, so far, no scissors or razor had touched. All he asked for, in conclusion, was victory. His prayer, we see, differed in this respect from that of Palamon, who had entreated Venus to let him win Emily whether he were victor or not. Thus did the two knights prove the different nature of their love, the one placing it before everything, and caring more to win Emily than to win the fight, while the other asked for victory alone, though as a means of winning the maiden.

Now as Arcite finished his prayer, he too was given a sign in answer to it, for the whole temple suddenly shook as with an earthquake, and the altar fires flamed up so brightly that the temple seemed ablaze, and at the same time the air was filled with sweetest odours. Then Arcite, though astonished and somewhat alarmed, hastened to throw fresh incense on the fires and to perform other rites to the god, and at last the breastplate on the statue of Mars seemed to ring, and he heard a low and faint voice issue from it which spoke the one word, " Victory ! "

Then did Arcite's heart bound with praise and thanksgiving to Mars, and filled with joy and hope he sped back to his lodging as blithe as a bird that hails a cloudless sun.

Now after this a great strife ensued among the gods and goddesses, for fierce contention arose between Venus and Mars, who had each promised succour to one particular knight, and the supreme god Jupiter had much ado to stay it, and knew not how to please them both, until the wise old god Saturn stepped in to settle the difference. He bade Venus be content, since all should end as she desired for her faithful follower Palamon, in time, even though Mars should enable Arcite to be the victor in the coming fight, and that he himself would help this to come about.

Part IV

The following morning the whole of Athens was astir betimes, and by daybreak every street resounded to the noise of trampling horses and clanging arms. Knights passed by in rapid succession mounted on prancing steeds and clad in brightly polished armour, surmounted with shining helmets of gold. Retainers and squires fastening straps and buckles, and armourers with file and hammer, hastened to and fro amongst them, while crowds of yeomen and menials armed with cudgels, eager to see all that went on, lined the way.

Above the clang of steel rose the sound of pipes, drums, and clarions, and the great hall of the palace was thronged with eager gazers discussing the chances of success between the rival knights.

Then the two Theban knights were led with great honour before Duke Theseus, who, clad in gorgeous apparel, was seated on a throne in one of the windows. Crowds of people flocked into the open space before it to see him there in state, and soon their voices were stilled by that of a herald, who, from a scaffold near by, made a proclamation. This stated that the duke had seen fit to modify his former purpose, and decreed that no life should be lost in the approaching tournament. The use of axes, short swords, and knives was forbidden, and only spears with blunt points might be used, while those who were vanquished were not to be slain, but taken prisoners and fastened to a stake that should be provided on either side of the lists. If the leader on either side were thus taken, the tournament should at once cease; and the herald concluded with the words:

"Now God speed you. Go forth and lay on fast.

With spears and with maces fight your fill. Go now on your way. This is our lord's will."

Then from all the people arose in response a shout that reached the heavens.

" God save such a lord, who is so good. He willeth no destruction of blood," they cried.

Then the trumpets sounded once more, and the whole company started forth for the lists, passing through the city, which was richly decorated with cloth of gold to do them honour as they went.

On either side of Duke Theseus rode Palamon and Arcite ; behind these came the queen and Emily, and after them others of the Court, and a procession of knights, all in due order according to their rank. Arrived at the lists, Theseus took up his position on a specially prepared seat. Near him sat the queen and Emily and the ladies of the Court, while the remaining seats were quickly filled with crowds of other spectators.

Through the western gate, and from the temple of Mars, rode Arcite into the lists, waving a red banner, and accompanied by his hundred knights ; and at the same moment, through the eastern gate, and from the temple of Venus, rode Palamon with his attendant knights, and waving a white banner. The two companies ranged themselves in order of battle on either side, and hard would it have been to say who was more likely to win, so evenly did they seem to be matched.

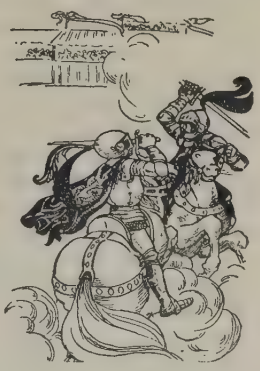
Now the gates were closed, and the herald, who had been riding up and down to see that all was in order, stood still and shouted,—

" Do your duty, young knights ! "

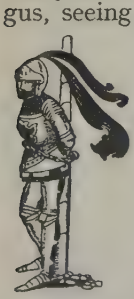
There was a blast of trumpets, and at once the fight began.

Great now was the hurly-burly. Spears resounded against steel breast-plates, and flashed in the sun twenty feet high as the blows fell thick and fast.

Blood flowed freely, lances shivered and were broken ; horses and men went down and were rolled under foot. Maces rained blows which broke bones even through stout armour. Often as the day went on did the merciful duke bid the fighters pause, while draughts of wine were served them. The two leaders met more than once during the day in personal conflict, and at last each tore the other from his horse, and fiercely did they strike and thrust ; but though the blood flowed freely from the sides of each, the victory was yet undecided.



All things, however, must come to an end at last, and so it was with this mighty tournament. While the two knights thus strove, with the ferocity of wild animals, the mighty Indian king Emetrius fought his way to the side of Arcite, and struck a blow at Palamon, which so severely wounded him that he was easily surrounded and made a prisoner. King Lycurgus, seeing his plight, rushed to the rescue, but too late, though he succeeded in unhorsing Emetrius, while Palamon managed to inflict a serious wound on him before he was dragged away by twenty knights to the stake. The fight still raged in spite of this, until Theseus, seeing what had befallen, bid it cease.



" Hold ! no more," he cried ; " the fight is done. I will be a true and just judge, and Arcite of Thebes shall have Emily for wife since he has the fortune to have won her in fair fight."

Then there arose such cheering and shouting

from all the people that it seemed to shake the very walls.

But from her place upon Olympus, Venus, the goddess of love, complained and wept so bitterly that her tears fell even to the lists, for it seemed to her that Saturn had played her false, since her own knight was thus dishonoured and defeated. But Saturn thus consoled her,—

" Daughter," he said, " hold thy peace ; for though Mars hath his will, and his knight hath won the boon he asked, that of victory in the fight, all is not ended, and by my head thou shalt be comforted soon."

But all seemed favourable to Arcite. The air was filled with loud acclaims in his honour, and the sound of trumpets and minstrelsy proclaiming his triumph arose on every side. Just at the height of his success, however, disaster befell. He was spurring along the course bare-headed, with eyes fixed on the fair Emily, who favouring the victor, as is often the way with women, cast on him a friendly eye, when misfortune overtook him.

For at this moment Saturn, by an evil device, caused a hideous apparition to appear out of the ground in front of his horse, which, startled and terrified at the sight, swerved and stumbled, pitching the victorious knight headlong to the ground, where he lay motionless, with his breast sadly injured, and his face quite blackened by the rush of blood to his head.

With mournful hearts attendants bore him to the palace, where he was gently laid in bed and tended with all the care and skill possible, and ever as he tossed on his couch the cry of " Emily, Emily " was on his lips.

While the victor in the fight lay thus stricken sorely, high revels took place for three days ; for Theseus thought it well not to disappoint every one, although Arcite's condition caused some anxiety. Prizes, too, he gave to those who had fought the best on either

side. At the end of the third day of feast and revelling he himself escorted the two kings, Emetrius and Lycurgus, for a whole day's journey past the city gates, and there the company dispersed, each man returning to his home by the nearest way.

Meanwhile the condition of Arcite had gone from bad to worse. All the aid of medicine and surgery failed to heal him, for the vital force of Nature refused to aid their efforts; and of a truth, when Nature refuses to help, one may as well say farewell to physic and prepare for death. Such was in truth the case with Arcite, and soon all hope of his recovery ceased. Arcite must die, and realizing himself that his last hour drew near, he sent for both Emily and Palamon to bid them farewell. And first addressing himself to Emily, he said,—

"Never may the sorrowful spirit in my heart declare one part of all its grief to you, my lady, whom I love more than any one. I leave to you the faithful service of my spirit, since my life may no longer last. Alas, the pain that I for you have suffered so long! Alas, the death! Alas, my Emily, my heart's queen! Farewell, sweet foe. Farewell, my wife, my Emily. Now take me softly in your arms, and for God's love hearken to what I say. With my cousin Palamon have I had bitter strife and rancour for many a day for love of you and from jealousy, but in all this world I truly know no knight so full of truth, honour, knightliness, and wisdom, nor so worthy to be loved as he. Well has he loved and served you, and if ever you should wed, I ask you not to forget Palamon, the true knight."

With these words the strength of Arcite began to fail rapidly, but his dim eyes still turned to the lady he had loved so truly, and the last words his faltering breath uttered were,—

"Mercy, Emily!"

Thus died Arcite, and Emily, overcome with grief,

shrieked and then swooned; and bitterly too did Palamon weep for the death of his kinsman whom he had loved so well before jealousy separated them, and whose last words had been so full of kindliness to him. In fact, the whole city bewailed the death of the brave young knight, thus snatched away just when love and happiness seemed awaiting him, and none mourned him more sincerely than Duke Theseus. None could bring him consolation save his aged father Ægeus, who spake words of wisdom which many years' experience of the joys and sorrows of the world had taught him.

"To every man," he said, "death must some time come.

> "This world is but a thoroughfare of woe,
> And we but pilgrims passing to and fro;
> Death is an end of every earthly pain."

Much more to the same effect did the wise old man say to his sorrowing son and to other mourners, bidding them moreover take heart and keep up each other's courage.

Duke Theseus then set to work to prepare great funeral rites in honour of Arcite, as was the ancient custom on the death of a hero.

A noble funeral pyre was prepared in the very grove where Palamon and Arcite had first contended on that fair May morning when he had ridden between the combatants, and Arcite and Emily had met face to face for the first time. Great oaks were felled and placed round the spot, and the body of Arcite, clad in cloth of gold and crowned with laurels, and bearing a sword in his hand, was placed on a bier, and taken

there in solemn state. Before it rode three men on white steeds, with trappings of bright steel, one of whom carried the dead knight's spear, the second his shield, and the third his bow. They were followed by the duke and his father Ægeus, bearing honey, wine, and milk in vessels of gold, while soon after them came Palamon, accompanied by all his knights clad in black, and showing every sign of mourning. After him came the sorrowful Emily, bearing a lighted torch with which to fire the pyre, as was the custom.

The pyre was built up with wood from all the trees that grew thereabouts, such as alder, oak, birch, aspen, elm, willow, and many more, and over these were heaped spices, and cloth of gold and garlands of flowers, and on the summit was placed Arcite in his bier. Then Emily set the pyre alight, and as it blazed up to heaven many of those present cast jewels and spears and costly raiment upon it in honour of the dead. After this there were contests of skill, and games and races, for this was the customary way of honouring the dead in Ancient Greece.

The story now draws to a close, for Arcite is dead and his funeral rites and ceremonies are ended, and those who mourned him have returned quietly to their homes, but we have yet to hear what finally befell the maiden Emily.

In time even her grief was healed, for in life we are not meant always to weep, but to take whatever blessings may be sent us with as cheerful a heart as may be, and so it was with the fair Emily, and with all those who wept for Arcite.

In course of time, too, the long enmity between Athens and Thebes was ended.

A council was summoned at Athens, and it was proposed that a friendly alliance should be made with Thebes. Whereupon Theseus sent heralds there to summon Palamon to his presence.

Still clad in mourning for Arcite, and with a cheer-

less countenance, Palamon promptly obeyed the summons, though without any idea as to its cause.

When he had reached the great hall, the duke, who sat there in state, sent messengers for Emily, who was also brought to his presence. Now, as the knight and princess stood before him, a great expectant silence reigned. For a short time the duke did not break it, but remained with downcast gaze as though lost in thought; then he spoke. In a long speech he reminded his hearers of the death of Arcite, and pointed out that the time to mourn was past, and also that no finer fate could be wished for a man than to die a glorious death when he had reached excellence, and was at the summit of his honours and renown, as Arcite had been. It was therefore well that Palamon and Emily should now cease to mourn for him, since their grief could be of no use to him, and would but grieve his spirit and be harmful to themselves. He had been duly mourned and honoured, but the time had come now to change to sunnier mood. Then turning to Emily, and taking her by the hand, he told her that it was the wish both of himself and of his council that she should wed the good knight Palamon, who had served her so faithfully and long. Then he bade Palamon approach, and taking his hand he placed that of Emily within it.

Thus did Palamon, the faithful lover, have his reward at last, as indeed had also the noble knight Arcite. For had not Arcite won the glory and honour that he sought, inspired by the love of Emily, though he did not live to claim her as his wife?

Very soon afterwards Palamon and Emily were

married amid great general rejoicings, and they lived together in happiness and prosperity for many a day, Palamon still serving Emily in all knightly devotion, and receiving from her in return a tender love, which formed a fitting reward for his long and faithful service.

Thus ended the tale of the Knight, who concluded it with the words :

> " Thus endeth Palamon and Emily ;
> And God save all this fair company."

THE SQUIRE'S TALE

At Sarra, in the land of Tartary,
There dwelt a king, and with the Russ warred he,
Through which there perished many a doughty man.—
This noble king by name was Cambuscán,
And in his time was of so great renown,
That no where else there sat beneath a crown
So excellent a lord in every thing.
Him lacked there nought belonging to a king,
Within the creed to which his race was born.
He kept the law to which he had been sworn ;
And thereto he was hardy, rich, and wise,
Always the same, serene of soul and eyes,
Piteous and just, benign and honourable,
Of his brave heart as any centre stable ;
Young, fresh, and strong, in arms desirous,
As any bachelor of all his house.
A fair person he was, and fortunate ;
And always kept so well a king's estate,
That there was no where such another man.

This noble king, this Tartar, Cambuscán,
Two princes had by Elfeta his wife,
Of which the eldest was named Algarsife,
The other Cambalo : and there was born
Also a daughter to him, like the morn,
Younger than both, whose name was Canace :
But to relate how beautiful was she,
Passeth the reach of my poetic wing ;
I dare not undertake so high a thing.

Mine English too sufficeth not. A man
Had need an Ovid be, or Mantuan,
And know all colours fitted for the art,
To show you what she was, in the least part ;
I am none such. Plain speech must be my plan.
And so befell, that when this Cambuscán
Had twenty winters been a crownéd king,
He bade, as was his custom in the spring,
The feast of his nativity be cried
In Sarra, his great city, far and wide,
The news whereof was glad to every ear.

Phœbus, the sun, full jovial was, and clear ;
For he was mounting nigh his exaltation
In Mars's face, and in his house and station
In Aries, the choleric hot sign.
Full lusty was the weather, and benign ;
For which the birds, against the sunny sheen,
What for the season and the sprouting green,
Securely and full loud sang their affections :
They seemed to say,—We now have got protections
Against the sword of winter, keen and cold.

This royal king then, glorious to behold
With crown and ermine, sat upon his dais
In his great hall, in all the people's gaze,
And held his feast, so rich and so serene,
In all the world was no such other seen.
What need describe it ? for to tell the array,
And half the meats, would take a summer's day ;
And therefore I pass by their dainty shows,
Their swans, and peacocks, and their heronneaues,
With meats that by a Tartar seneschal
Are held full dear, though here we count them small.

Dais, the elevated portion of a hall, where the chief person sat under a canopy.
Heronneaues, young herons.

Besides, the bell hath warned me it is prime,
And I must trespass not on others' time,
But into closer strain my theme enforce.

And so befell, that after the third course,
While that this king sat thus in his array,
Hearing his minstrels and his harpers play
Before him at his board deliciously,
In at the hall-door lo ! all suddenly
There came a knight upon a steed of brass,
That in his hand a mirror held of glass ;
Upon his thumb he had a golden ring,
And by his side a naked sword hanging ;
And up he rideth to the royal board.
In all the hall there was not spoke a word
For marvel of this knight. Him to behold
Full busily they waited, young and old.

This strange knight, that appeared thus suddenly,
All armed except his head, full gorgeously,
Saluteth king and queen, and nobles all,
In order as they sat within the hall,
With so high reverence and regardfulness,
Both in his word and in his whole address,
That Gawairis self, with his old courtesy,
Had he left Fairy-land, and stood thereby,
Had not improved him in a single thing :
And after this, strait looking at the king,
His message with a manly voice he spoke,
After the form belonging to his folk,
With not a fault of syllable or letter ;
And that his meaning might be felt the better,
His cheer was suited to his words ; as teach
Those learnéd wits, that ken the art of speech.
I may not tell it as he did : my strain

On others' time. The reader will recollect that it is the Squire who is relating the story, and that more than half the others are yet untold.

Is far too weak such rhetoric to attain.
Yet to repeat it, in a common way,
As showing what at large he meant to say,
Thus much will I attempt to call to mind :

" My lord, the king of Araby and Ind,
My sovereign master, on this solemn day,
Saluteth you, as he best can and may,
And sendeth you, in honour of your feast,
By me, your ready servant though your least,
This steed of brass ; which well, as in this hall,
Can, in the space of a day natural,
That is to say, in four-and-twenty hours,
Where'er you list, in sunshine or in showers,
Carry your body into every place,
In which it please you show your sovereign face,
Nor stain you with a speck, through foul or fair ;
Or if you list to sail as high in air
As doth an eagle, when he wills to soar,
This same good steed shall bear you evermore
Without a peril, (though ye take no keep
Of bridle as ye go ; nay, sit and sleep) ;
Then turn again with writhing of a pin.
He, Sir, that made it, knew all arts herein,
And waited upon many a constellation
While patiently he worked his operation,
And knew full many a seal, and many a bond.

" This glass I hold, clear as a diamond,
Hath such a pow'r, that in it men may see
When there shall happen any adversity
Unto your reign, or to yourself ; and know,
By very sight, who is your friend or foe :
And more than this, if any lady bright
Have set her heart on any thankless knight,
And he be false, here shall the lady see

Writhing, turning or twisting.

His new love, and his thorough subtlety,
So plain and clear, that nothing he shall hide.

" Wherefore against this lusty summer-tide,
This glass, and this ring also, my lord, he
Hath sent unto my lady Canace,
Your excellent daughter that is here ;—a thing
So virtuous, this simple-seeming ring,
That let her bear it, either on her hand,
Or in her purse, and she shall understand
The tongue and speech of every fowl that flies,
And answer him in his own birdly wise.
Also each herb that groweth shall she read,
And whom it may avail, though that he bleed
From dreadful wounds, never so deep and wide.

" This naked sword, that hangeth by my side,
Such virtue hath, that whomsoe'er it smite,
Clean through his armour will it carve and bite,
Were it as thick as is a branchéd oak ;
And whosoe'er is wounded with the stroke,
Shall never be whole man, till of your grace
It please you stroke him in the wounded place
With the flat side. The wound will then be closed.
All this is truth, Sir. Nothing have I glosed.
Nor while 'tis held in hand, will the sword fail."

And when the stranger thus hath told his tale,
He backeth from the hall with reverent heed,
And so, forth issuing, lighteth from the steed.
The steed, which like the sun for brightness shone,
Stood in the court as still as any stone.
The knight hath doffed his armour for a vest
Of peace, and sitteth as an honoured guest ;
And to a tow'r, where all high gifts are stored,
Are borne in state the mirror and the sword.
But unto Canace is borne the ring,
Solemnly, there as she sat next the king.
As to the horse, immoveable it stood,

Stuck to the ground, as though it had been glued :
Nor had it stirred, I ween, though folk had brought
Pulley or windlass. It had served them nought.
And why ? Because none knew the mystery ;
And so they left him, standing steadfastly,
Till, sometime before dusk, the knight may choose
To show them how to stir his brazen thews.

Great was the press came swarming to and fro
To gaze upon this steed, that standeth so ;
For it was of a make so broad, and long,
And high, and so proportioned to be strong,
It matched therein a steed of Lombardy,
And yet withal it was so quick of eye,
So " horsely," and so full of airy grace,
It might have been of gentle Apulian race.
The people thought so ; and were all agreed,
From tail to ear it was a matchless steed.
But what incessantly amazed them, was
How it could go like life, and yet was brass :
All deemed it a thing magical ; but then
How made, and by what sort of man of men ?
Divers the folk, divers the fantasy :
For just as many wits as heads there be.
They murmured like a swarm, out of the hive :
Some deemed the creature senseless, some alive ;
Some likened it, from what is told to us
By the old poets, to the Pegasus,—
The horse that had the wings ; and others feared
It might be like the Greek horse, that appeared
Within Troy town, and laid the city low.
Quoth one of these,—" I dread it : for I trow
Soldiers are stuffed therein, and 'tis a plot.
'Twere well the thing were looked into, God wot."
Another whispered, " He's a fool, this clerk ;
'Tis manifestly some magician's work ;
Some juggle, Sirs ; a kind of—sort of—trick : "
And others doubt, whether some heretic

Might not have wrought it, or some infidel,
And whether, taking it, the king did well.
For what mean spirits may not comprehend,
They gladly construe to the baser end.

Some again marvelled on the glass, and how
Fools could suppose it what they heard but now.
But others said, it might be well supposed,
Since natural art found wondrous things enclosed
In angles and reflections, as a pond
Encloseth scenes beside it, and beyond :
In Rome, they said, was such a glass ; and, lo !
Read what Alhazen and Vitellio,
And other wits have spoken in their lives,
That writ of mirrors and of perspectives,
As Aristotle did to please his lord.

Others again marvelled upon the sword,
That pierced through everything ; and fell in speech
Of Telephus, whose wound, in stead of leech,
Was by the quaint spear of Achilles closed,
Right in such wise as hath been just supposed.
Of metals, and of med'cines therewithal,
And from their compounds what strange things might fall,
Much they discoursed ; but more than I may tell ;
And then upon the lady's ring they fell
And said they never heard of craft so strange,
Save what by some was deemed within the range
Of Moses' wisdom, and of Solomon's ;
And then they spake apart, in lower tones.

Phœbus hath left his chair meridional,
And now was moving t'wards the Lion's stall,
(The gentle beast, with his star Aldrian,)
When that this Tartar king, this Cambuscán,
Rose from his board, there as he sat full high :
Before him goeth the loud minstrelsy ;

And thus he paceth to his painted hall,
Where other music soundeth over all,
And played such things, it was a heaven to hear.

This noble king is set upon his throne ;
The stranger knight is brought to him anon,
And goeth down the dance with Canace.

Here rageth now the sport and jollity,
Such as no dull man fitteth to devise :
He must have known Love well and his bright eyes,
And been a festive soul, as fresh as May,
To dare to hope to tell you the array.
Who else could speak of all the forms of dances
Dulcet and wild, and the fresh countenances
Full of such looks and such dissimulings,
For fear of jealous men's discoverings ?
No man but Launcelot, and he is dead.
Therefore I pass by all this lustyhead,
And say no more ; leaving, in midst of all,
The mirth to spin, till men to supper call.

The steward bade the spicers haste, and see
The wines made hot, during this melody ;
And now the ushers and the squires are gone ;
The spicers and the butlers come anon ;
They eat and drink, and when this hath an end,
The company unto the temple wend,
As reason is ; and then they sup by day.
What need instruct you of this new array ?
Who wotteth not, that at a prince's feast
Is plenty for the greatest and the least,
And dainties more than such as I may know ?

Launcelot of the Lake, famous for the perfection of his knight-errantry, which included the power to entertain and be eloquent, as well as to fight. There is also an allusion here to his love for Ginevre, and the jealousy of King Arthur.—LEIGH HUNT.

So after supper this great king must go
To see the horse of brass, with all a rout
Of ladies and of lords him round about ;
For such a wond'ring was there on this thing,
That since the siege of Troy, which poets sing,
Where on a horse was wond'ring among men,
Never was such a wond'ring as was then.
But, finally, the king asketh the knight
The virtue of this courser, and the might,
And prayed him to detail his governaunce.

This horse anon began to trip and dance,
Soon as the knight laid hand upon the rein,
Who said, " There is no more, Sir, to explain
Or bear in mind when we two speak alone,
Than trill a pin here, as shall then be shown ;
Yet also you must name your journey's end :
Likewise must bid him, when you please, descend,
Then trill another pin, and then will he
Go down where'er you please full easily,
And rest, whate'er betide him, in one spot,
Though all the world be sworn that he shall not.
Trill yet this other pin, and in a wink
Vanish will he, whither no soul may think ;
And yet return, be it by day or night,
The moment he is called, as swift as light.
Ride where you list, there's no more need be done."

When thus the king his lesson had begun,
And furthermore, when, whispering with the knight,
He knew the thing and its whole form aright,
Full glad was he : then turning with his train
Repaired him to his mirth yet once again.
The bridle to a tow'r is borne, and there
Laid up among the jewels, rich and rare ;

The horse has vanished, I may not tell how ;
And I myself, awhile, must vanish now,
Leaving this Cambuscán, this noble king,
Feasting his lords till day was nigh to spring.

Second Part

The nourisher of good digestion, sleep,
'Gan on them wink, and bade their thoughts take keep
That mirth as well as labour will have rest ;
And with a gaping mouth, the king expressed
The will of Sleep, that it was time for bed,
For blood was dominant in drowsy head.
" Cherish the friend of nature, blood," quoth he.
Gaping, they gave him thanks, by two and three,
And so the company withdrew to rest,
As sleep so willed. They took it for the best.

The dreams they dreamt shall not be told for me.
Full were their heads of feast's fumosity,
Which causeth men, without a horse, to fly.
They slept, until the day was broad and high.
The most of them,—save lady Canace ;
For like sweet maiden, temperate was she,
And of her father had she taken leave,
To go to rest, soon after it was eve ;
She wished not to look pale next day, nor be
In aught unfitting the festivity.
And so she slept her first sleep, and then woke ;
For such a pleasure in her heart she took
Of her two presents by the stranger brought,
She twenty times changed colour at the thought.
Now for the ring, now for the glass it was ;
And in a dream she saw things in the glass.

Wherefore, before the sun 'gan up to glide,
She called the good dame sleeping by her side,
And said it was her pleasure to arise.
The good old dame, that was as gladly wise
As her sweet self (in sooth had trained her so),
Said smilingly, " Why, where then would ye go ?
For all the people, Madam, are in bed."
" I cannot sleep, do all I may," she said ;
" And so I would arise and walk about."

This good old lady calleth the whole rout
Of women, and they rise, and bustleth she,
And riseth also then fresh Canace,
As ruddy and bright as is the vernal sun,
When in the Ram his fourth degree is run ;
No higher was he when he viewed her face ;
And forth she walketh at an easy pace,
Arrayed, as suiteth with the lusty prime,
Lightly to play, and to enjoy the time
With some few maidens of her company ;
And forth into the park thus moveth she.

The vapour, breathing upward on her road,
Maketh the sun to seem ruddy and broad.
Nathless the dawning was so fair a sight,
It made the hearts in all their bosoms light ;
And she herself, what for the time of day,
And the sweet birds, and all she heard them say
By reason of the ring, halteth full oft,
And listeneth, and laugheth, glad and soft.

Amidst a tree all dry, as white as chalk,
As Canace was playing in her walk,
There sat a falcon over head, full high,
That with a piteous voice so 'gan to cry,
And beat herself so hard with both her wings,
That all the wood rang with her sufferings,

And the red blood went trickling down the tree ;
And ever shrieked and flapped herself thus she,
And with her beak so tore into her breast,
That never was brute beast, the cruellest,
That had not wept (if beasts could weep) to hear
How loud she shrieked. It was a very fear.

Now never lived the fowler that could tell
Of falcons, and describe their beauty well,
Who spoke of one which might with this compare
For gentle shape as well as plumage fair.
She seemed a Falcon Peregrine, far flown ;
And ever and anon she gave a groan
For lack of blood, and in a swoon went she,
Till she had well nigh fallen from the tree.

This fair king's daughter, Canace, whose ring
Upon her finger told her every thing
Which birds might say, or might be said to birds,
Hath comprehended all the falcon's words ;
And to the tree she hasteth fearfully,
And at the bird uplooketh piteously,
And holdeth her lap wide to save her fall,
In case again she swoon on the tree tall :
And a long while so stood and waited she,
Till at last she spoke full tenderly :—

"What is the cause," quoth she, "if ye may tell,
That thus ye be in very pain of hell ?
Take heed, I pray thee, grovelling there above :
Is it for grief of death, or loss of love ?
For these are the two things that cause most woe
In gentle heart. Nought else could grieve thee so.
Yourself ye wreak upon yourself ; which showeth,
No other cause of your sharp deed there goeth,

Nor do I see ye chased by other creature.
For love of God, and as ye are of nature
Gentle and free, say what may help ye best ;
For never saw I yet, from east to west,
Creature that fared with its own self so ill :
Truly, ye slay me with your woeful will.
Come down, for God's sake, from the tree ; do, bird ;
And on the faith of a king's daughter's word,
I will amend your sorrow, if I may,
With all my might, and that ere close of day,
So help me the great God that made us all.
As for your wounds, here's hyssop on the wall,
And balm, and myrrh, shall swiftly salve that
trouble."

But at these words the falcon 'gan redouble
Her piteous shrieks, till with a heavy groan
She fell to earth, and lay there as a stone.
As lieth a still stone, so lieth she.
Canace, in her lap full tenderly,
Taketh her up, and from her swoon she waketh,
And when delivered from her swoon she breaketh
Her silence into words, and thus hath spoken :—

" That gentle heart hath pity on heart broken
May well be thought, since any small distress
Winneth such heart to show its gentleness.
I know thou pitiest me, fair Canace,
Of very womanly benignity
Which Nature in your loving heart hath set.
And yet, out of no hope to break my net,
But to obey a heart so kind and free,
And to warn others by unhappy me,
As the great lion by the whelp has taught,
Right for such cause, and in no other thought,
While I yet breathe, and can speak leisurely,
This heart, now breaking, will I show to thee."

While thus the bird was speaking, the king's daughter
Wept, as if she were turning into water,
Till that the falcon bade her to be still,
And with a sigh obeyed her gentle will.

" Well was I born," quoth she ; " alas the day !
And fostered in a rock of marble grey
So tenderly, that nothing ailed me long :
I knew not what misfortune was, nor wrong,
Till I could flee, under the heav'ns, full high.

" There dwelt a tiercelet in the place, hard by,
Who seemed a well of very crystal truth,
All were he deep in every fault of youth.
He wrapped it all so close in humble cheer,
And had a way so purely sweet and clear,
And was so pleasant, and so busy kind,
No traitor could have guessed his traitorous mind ;—
Full deep in grain he dyed his pleasing powers ;—
Yea, as the serpent hideth under flowers
Till such time as the bite proclaimeth it,
Right so this god of love's own hypocrite
Put forth all sweets that make the shows of love :—
And as on tombstones all is fair above,
But under is the corpse, such as ye wot,
Such was this hypocrite, so fair, yet not ;
And in this wise he fashioned his intent,
That, save the fiend, none dreamed of what he meant,
And served, and wept, and plained, and spoke of death,
Till that my heart, too soft beneath such breath,
Gave him its love, in very thanks for his,
Not knowing how enough to pay such bliss.
And when he found his triumph gone so far,
And that my star had bowed beneath his star,
He cared no more, although no more he won,
But left me, with a foolish heart undone,

And set his wits to gain as much elsewhere,
This being all his love, and all his care.

" He went alas ! and one thing dare say I,
I know what I but thought I knew, thereby ;
I know what is the pain of death indeed.
You might have sworn you saw his own heart bleed
When that he went, his look was so like mine,
So sorrowful ; but it was all design.
He said his honour willed that he must go,
And I so thought, since oft it falleth so.
I made a virtue of necessity,
And held my hand out, since 'twas so to be,
And took his own, and hid from him my grief,
Well as I could, to give his heart relief,
And said,—" Lo ! I am yours, and shall be, ever."
I am. But him I shall see more, no, never.

" What answered he, it needeth not rehearse :
Who can say better things ? who can do worse ?
I trow he had the ancient text in mind,
Which saith, that all things, pairing with their kind,
Gladden their hearts. Thus argue men, I guess ;
And what men pair with, is newfangleness ;
They act, as birds do, which they feed in cages :
For though they, day and night, tend them like pages,
And strew the bird's room fair and soft as silk,
And give him sugar, honey, bread, and milk,
Yet right anon, let but his door be up,
And with his feet he spurneth down his cup,
And to the wood will be, and feed on worms.—
In that new college keepeth he his terms,
And learneth love of his own proper kind ;
No gentleness of home his heart may bind.

" So fared it with this tiercelet, woe's the day !
Though he were gently born, and fresh, and gay,
And goodly to behold, and humble and free,
Yet on a time he saw a new bird flee,
And suddenly he loved this new bird so,
That from his falcon must his fancy go,
And he be hers, and look no more on me ;
Alas ! alas ! and there's no remedy,
Nor death itself, methinks, will let me die."

And with that word this falcon 'gan to cry,
And swooneth oft within the lady's lap.
Great was the sorrow made for her mishap
By Canace and by her maidens all :
They knew not how their help might best befall ;
Yet Canace home beareth in her lap
The wounded thing, and hasteth to enwrap
The part in balsams, which the beak had hurt.
Then dug she in the ground for plant and wort
Of precious kinds ; and day and night she drew
Sanatives thence ; and by her bed a mew
All soft she set, with azure velvet lined,
To show the truth that is in womankind ;
But all without she had it painted green,
On which all false and mankind fowls were seen ;
And pies and daws coming on every side
With open mouths, to spite them and to chide.

Thus leave I Canace to keep her bird :—
Of her ring now I speak no other word,
Nor shall, till in good time my theme explain
How that this falcon gat her love again,
Repentant, as the Tartar stories show,
By mediation of Prince Cambalo,
Son of the king, as at the first was told.
Meantime through fields of battle must I hold
My purposed way, and such adventures tell,
As never in the world the like befell.

First will I tell of this great Cambuscán,
That in his time full many a city wan ;
And after will I speak of Algarsife,
How that he wan Theodora to his wife,
For whom full oft in peril great he was,
Had help not reached him in the horse of brass ;
And after will I speak of Cambalo,
That fought in tourney with the brethren two,
Ere that the victor might his sister win ;
And where I left, there will I fresh begin.

* * * * *

[Here stopped the divine old poet, to the regret of all after ages. This is the story that Milton so admired, and of which he wrote :—

" Or call up him that left half told
The story of Cambúscan bold,
Of Camball and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That owned the virtuous ring and glass ;
And of the wonderous horse of brass,
On which the Tartar king did ride."]

MORE OF THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

Among the pilgrims there were several who held office in the Church as well as the monk already mentioned. There was, for instance, a friar named Hubert, who was very popular with all on account of his merry, easy ways. He sang an excellent song which he could accompany on a lute, and as he turned the words carefully on his tongue to give them all the sweetness possible, his eyes sparkled in his head like stars on a frosty night. His cheerful ways and courteous speech helped him everywhere when he went forth to collect alms, and made him the best beggar in his house, and he took care to have little to do with the poor. He wore fine costly raiment, and in fact he was as unlike the ideal friar vowed to poverty as could well be imagined.

A worthy companion to the friar was a pardoner, who had come straight from Rome, bearing a wallet before him stuffed full of pardons from the Pope, and ready for sale. He had long yellow hair which hung straight on his shoulders from under a small cap, and his eyes were timid like those of a hare. He carried numerous sham relics, out of which he made a great deal of money, and as he rode he sang a love-song in a loud shrill voice, to which a summoner who rode beside him joined in a hearty second. This latter was an officer who had to summon offenders in the ecclesiastical courts. He had a fat red face, with a black beard, and he presented a very grotesque appearance,

for on his head he wore a garland, and in front of him he carried a large cake as a shield.

Very different from these was a parson who also rode in the company, and who was all that a parish priest should be.

Though poor in worldly goods, he was rich in virtue and in learning. He was full of kindness and patience, and a true shepherd to his flock. His parish was a very scattered one, but no matter what the distance nor how stormy the weather, if any one was in distress he would hasten to help, going on foot with a simple staff in his hand, and out of his own small means he was always ready to give help to the poor. He taught the sinful plainly and truly, but above all he believed in the force of example, and was careful to lead a good life himself. Holy and virtuous in every respect he was, but this by no means made him harsh or severe to wrongdoers. To such as these he would speak in gentle, kindly fashion, and only if they continued in their evil course would he chide sharply, and this he would then do without fear were their estate high or low. In fact, there could nowhere be found a better priest.

> "Christ's own lore, and his apostles twelve,
> He taught, but first he followed it himself."

Of a different order again was a lady prioress, who rode with a certain amount of state. She had in attendance on her a nun who served as a chaplain, and three other priests. Her name was the Lady Eglantine, and she was the most refined and elegant creature imaginable. She had a simple, innocent smile, and her language was most gentle. It was beautiful to hear her sing the service in a high-pitched nasal voice, and as for her French, she really spoke it admirably, after the school of Stratford-at-Bowe! The French of Paris was not known to her.

Her table manners were really most refined. She

never let bits of food fall from her mouth, nor greased her fingers with the sauce, nor spilt things on her dress, and she wiped her mouth so carefully before drinking that she left no mark on her cup.

As for her feelings, she was the most tender-hearted person imaginable. She would weep if she saw a mouse caught in a trap. She had several lap-dogs which she fed with roast meat, and milk, and crumbs of bread, and she shed many tears if one of them died or even if she saw one of them beaten.

Her wimple was carefully plaited above her wide forehead. Her nose was well cut, her mouth small, and her eyes as grey as glass. Her cloak was very neat, and her principal ornament a gold pendant bearing the motto " Love conquers all," which was fastened to some coral beads round her arm.

The Landlord now picked out one of these priests attendant on the prioress to entertain the company with a story.

" Come hither thou, sir," he said boldly, " and tell us a story that shall cheer our hearts and make us merry."

The priest obeyed right willingly, and proceeded to tell a story of a Cock and a Fox, which afforded the rest of the company much amusement. But before reading this tale let us see how Chaucer described the Prioress and the Parson.

THE PRIORESS AND THE PARSON

THERE was, likewise, a Nun, a PRIORESS,
That of her smiling was full simple and coy.
Her greatest oath was but " by Saint Eloy ; "
And she was naméd Madam Eglentine.
Right well she sang the services divine,
Entunéd in her nose with accent sweet ;
And French she spake full properly and neat,
After the school of Stratford, at Bow town,
For French of Paris was to her unknown.
At table she was scrupulous withal ;
No morsel from her lips did she let fall,
Nor in her sauce would dip her fingers deep.
Well would she carry a morsel, and well keep,
That not a drop e'er fell upon her breast.
In courtesy her pleasure much did rest.
Her dainty upper-lip she wiped so clean
That in her cup there was no farthing seen
Of grease, when she had drunk ; and for her meat
Full seemly bent she forward on her seat.
And of a truth she was of great disport ;
Pleasant to all and amiable of port.
It gave her pain to counterfeit the ways
Of court ; its stately manner and displays ;
And to be held in distant reverence.

But for to tell you of her consciénce,
She was so tender and so piteous,
She would shed tears if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were hurt or dead.
She had some small hounds, which she always fed

With roasted meat, and milk, and fine wheat bread;
But sore wept she if one of them were dead,
Or if men with a stick e'er struck it smart:
And all was consciénce and tender heart.
Full seemly was her kerchief crimped across;
Her nose well cut and long; eyes grey as glass;
Her mouth was small, and thereto soft and red,
And certainly a forehead fair she had:
It was almost a span in breadth, I trow;
And truly she was not of stature low.
Most proper was her cloak, as I was ware.
Of coral small about her arm she bare
Two strings of beads, bedizened all with green,
And thereon hung a broach of gold full sheen,
On which was graven first a crownéd A,
And after "*Amor vincit omnia.*"
Another Nun, also, with her had she—
Who served instead of chaplain—and Priests three.

A good man of religion did I see,
And a poor PARSON of a town was he:
But rich he was of holy thought and work.
He also was a learnéd man, a clerk,
And truly would Christ's holy gospel preach,
And his parishioners devoutly teach.
Benign he was and wondrous diligent,
And patient when adversity was sent;
Such had he often proved, and loath was he
To curse for tythes and ransack poverty;
But rather would he give, there is no doubt,
Unto his poor parishioners about,
Of his own substance, and his offerings too.
His wants were humble, and his needs but few.
Wide was his parish—houses far asunder—
But he neglected nought for rain or thunder,
In sickness and in grief to visit all
The farthest in his parish, great and small;

Always on foot, and in his hand a stave.
This noble example to his flock he gave ;
That first he wrought, and afterwards he taught.
Out of the Gospel he that lesson caught,
And this new figure added he thereto,
That if gold rust, then what should iron do ?
And if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,
No wonder if an ignorant man should rust :
And shame it is, if that a priest take keep,
To see an obscene shepherd and clean sheep.
Well ought a priest to all example give,
By his pure conduct, how his sheep should live.
He let not out his benefice for hire,
Leaving his flock encumbered in the mire,
While he ran up to London, to St. Paul's,
To seek a well-paid chantery for souls,
Or with a loving friend his pastime hold ;
But dwelt at home and tended well his fold,
So that to foil the wolf he was right wary :
He was a shepherd, and no mercenáry.
And though he holy was and virtuous,
He was to sinful men full piteous ;
His words were strong, but not with anger fraught ;
A lore benignant he discreetly taught.
To draw mankind to heaven by gentleness
And good example, was his business.
But if that any one were obstinate,
Whether he were of high or low estate,
Him would he sharply check with altered mien :
A better parson there was nowhere seen.
He paid no court to pomps and reverence,
Nor spiced his conscience at his soul's expense ;
But Christ's own lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taught—but first he followed it himself.

R. H. Horne.

Spiced his conscience—that is, he did not embalm or preserve his conscience by sophistries and artificial moralities.

THE PRIEST'S TALE

A POOR widow, somewhat advanced in years, once dwelt in a small cottage beside a grove in a certain dell.

This widow of whom I speak had led a most simple life ever since the death of her husband, for her worldly goods were but few, and she had both herself and two daughters to keep. She had three well-grown cows, three calves, and a sheep named Mall. Her hut was black with soot, for it had no chimney, and the meals that she ate in it were of the most meagre description. No dainty morsel ever passed her lips, for her diet was strictly in accordance with her means. She was therefore never ill from over-eating, and her medicines were temperate living, plenty of exercise, and a contented mind. The result was that the gout never prevented her from dancing, nor did apoplexy affect her head. She drank no wine, neither white nor red, and brown bread and milk was her principal fare, varied occasionally with a bit of fried bacon or an egg or two.

The widow had a yard near the cottage enclosed with palings and surrounded with a dry ditch, and in the yard she kept a cock and some hens. The cock's name was Chanticleer, and in the whole country there was not his equal for crowing. His voice was as loud and as cheerful as was the organ in the church on feast-days, and he was so punctual in his time of crow-

ing that you could tell the time by him better than by the church clock. His comb was of a deeper red than coral, and indented like the battlements of a castle wall. His bill was as black and shining as jet; his legs and his toes were of azure blue; his talons were whiter than a lily, and his plumage like burnished gold. He was truly a magnificent bird.

This fine cock had with him seven hens, who were his wives, and who were like him in colour. One of them whose throat was of the brightest hue was called Damoiselle Pertelote. Courteous she was, very discreet, gracious, and most companionable, and she had behaved so well ever since she was a tiny chicken seven days old that Chanticleer thought very highly of her and loved her very much.

It really was a joy to hear these two birds sing "My love is far away" in concert; for be it understood that at the time of which I write birds and beasts could both speak and sing in human language.

It chanced that one day at dawn, as Chanticleer sat on his perch with his seven wives, Pertelote, who was next him, was dismayed to hear him make a most extraordinary noise such as a person who was having a very bad dream might make.

"Dear heart," she cried, "what aileth you, that you groan in this way? Shame on you!"

"My dear," replied Chanticleer, "I pray you calm yourself. I dreamt that I had met with such misfortune that I have not yet quite recovered from my fright. I pray that this dream will never come true, and that I shall not be a miserable captive as I dreamt I was."

Chanticleer, then fully awake at last, proceeded to tell his faithful Pertelote all about his dream which had so greatly perturbed him.

"I dreamt," he said, "that I was running up and down in our yard when I saw a beast like a large dog who seemed as though he would seize and kill me. His colour was between yellow and red, and his tail and both his ears were tipped with black. He had a short snout and two fiercely glowing eyes. His appearance, in fact, made me nearly die of fright. No doubt it was this dream which caused me to groan in my sleep."

"Now out upon you for a faint heart!" cried Pertelote indignantly. "Alas! I declare that you have quite lost my affection, for in truth I could never love a coward. And indeed every one of my sex would say the same, for a wife expects her husband to be brave as well as wise and discreet, and neither mean nor a fool. How dare you, for shame, tell me that you were afraid? Have you no man's heart within you?"

Pertelote having thus vented her indignation, proceeded to give Chanticleer a little wifely advice.

"I have no doubt," she said, "that your bad dream was caused by nothing more or less than a little indigestion, which can be soon cured. Now heed my advice, and as soon as we descend from the perch take a dose of medicine. As there is no apothecary at hand, I will show you myself which herbs are most likely to do you good, for there are plenty in our own yard which will cool your blood and cure you. We have there laurel, hellebore, spurge, fumitory, and others, and if you peck a bit of each as they grow, I am quite sure they will do you good. Otherwise, I am much afraid that in your present condition the heat of the sun will give you a fever or the ague. So be guided by me and fear no more dreams."

"Madam," said the cock, "I am much obliged for your wisdom. Nevertheless, we read in old books that dreams are often sent as a warning, and are the

forerunners of joy or ill. One author of renown relates a striking instance of this. He tells a story of two comrades journeying together, who came to a town which was so crowded that they could not find even a cottage which had room to lodge them both. In consequence they were forced to part company for the night, and one of them found a fair lodging, while the other had no better accommodation than a stall in a stable for oxen. Now it so befell that the one who was comfortably lodged had a dream in the early morning hours, in which he thought he heard his comrade say to him, 'Alas! for in an ox's stall I shall this night be murdered! Help, dear brother, help, or I die!'

"He started from his dream full of fear; but once awake, he dismissed it from his mind, and turning over went to sleep again.

"Twice more did he dream the same dream, and then he had a fourth dream, in which he thought that his comrade came to him and told him that the murder had actually taken place, that he had been killed for the sake of his gold, and that his body would be placed in a cart of refuse and taken to the western gate of the city.

"The next day he found that the dream was quite true. When he went to seek his friend at the cattle stables, he was not to be found, and the owner of the place declared that he had left the town at daybreak. The other's suspicions were aroused at this, and starting for the western gate of the city, he found his friend's murdered body in the cart, even as he had told him in the dream it would be. Through his

dream, too, were the murderers traced and brought to justice.

"There is another story, too, of a man who was warned in a dream not to set sail on a certain day lest he should be drowned. But he paid no heed, merely laughing at the dream, and, behold! the ship was wrecked and every one on board was lost.

"And so, my dear Lady Pertelote, you see that people should not too heedlessly dismiss their dreams of warning. Indeed, I can give you many more instances from ancient history of the same; and as for your wonderful remedies of herbs and such like, I set no store by them at all. I never cared for such medicines, and hold them in contempt."

Chanticleer having thus as he thought asserted his dignity, turned to more cheerful topics, and began to flatter Pertelote, and tell her how much he admired her beauty.

"Now let us leave this dismal subject and be merry," he said, turning to her kindly. "The fact is that when I gaze at my beautiful Pertelote, and see the bright scarlet ring round each of her eyes, I forget all my terror. And while I have you sitting by my side I feel so full of happiness that I can defy any dream of evil warning."

The sun had now risen, and with these words Chanticleer flew from his perch, and having found some grains of corn on the floor of the yard he called to his hens to come and share them. One would never have known him now for the same bird who had been frightened by a dream. He had quite a regal aspect as he stalked up and down calling to his hens, as brave as a lion, and so proud and haughty that he hardly condescended to set his foot on the ground. Whenever he found a grain he clucked to the hens, and they

all came running at once obedient to his call. Thus, like a prince in the halls of his palace, we may leave Chanticleer for the moment.

From this happy condition of affairs I must now turn to relate the mishap that befell him.

It was the first of April when Chanticleer was walking to and fro in the yard with his wives, and as he cast his eyes at the bright sun he knew at once by the signs of the heavens that it was six o'clock, and began to crow with a blissful cry. Then turning to Pertelote, he said to her,—

" Madame Pertelote, my dearest joy, just hearken how the birds sing, and see how fresh are the opening buds. My heart is full of mirth and gladness."

It was just then that sudden disaster overtook him, for a deadly enemy was even then lying in wait for him but a few yards away.

In the grove near to the farmyard a fox had dwelt for three years, and that very night he had broken through the palings and crept inside, where he lay concealed in a bed of herbs until a suitable opportunity to seize Chanticleer should come.

O false murderer waiting thus in hiding! O treacherous dissembler! Alas, Chanticleer, that ever you left your perch this bright spring morning, for now is the warning in your dream likely to prove true! Soon will you be convinced of the folly of listening to the advice of women, and wish you had not heeded that of Pertelote.

Meanwhile Pertelote herself and her sisters were dusting themselves merrily in the sand in full sunshine, while Chanticleer sang the most cheerful of songs close by.

Now suddenly there was a most extraordinary change in his notes. Instead of a clear " cock-a-doodle-doo," there came nothing but " cock, cock," as if all the heart had gone out of him, and this was in truth the case. For as Chanticleer sang, his eye

had fastened on a butterfly among the herbs where Master Reynard the fox lay very low on the ground, and all at once he caught sight of the fox himself. His first impulse was to fly, but as he gazed in terrified wonder at the fox, the latter addressed him in a smooth-tongued, kindly way.

"Gentle sir," he said, "why would you go? Why be afraid of me who am your friend? I should indeed be worse than a fiend if I desired any harm to you. I have not come to spy on you, but truly the cause of my coming was only to hear you sing. For of a truth you sing as beautifully as an angel, and are more skilled in music than any songster I have heard. My lord your father, and also your gentle mother, have both been in my house, to my great delight; and indeed, sir, I should be very glad to please you. Talking of singing, I would have you know that I can truly declare that, saving yourself, I never heard any one sing as your father used to do of a morning. Indeed, it was with his whole heart that he sang. And in order to make his voice the stronger, he stood on the tips of his toes and stretched out his neck until his eyes blinked with the effort. Above all, too, he was of such discretion that there never was such a one as he.

"Now by holy charity, sing, my sweet sir, I entreat, and let me hear if your song is worthy of comparison with his!"

The foolish and vain Chanticleer was so much taken in by all this flattery that he forgot his fear, and thought of nothing but pleasing the fox by his singing. He flapped his wings, stood high on his toes, stretched out his neck, and with half-closed eyes began to crow his very loudest. The wily fox, who thus saw his deep-laid scheme successful, immediately darted out from

his hiding-place, and the next moment seized Chanticleer in his mouth and bore him off in all haste towards the wood.

Never since the siege of Troy was there such an outcry as now arose from the seven hens when they saw their lord and master thus carried off. And above all, Pertelote sent forth the shrillest and most distressful cries. Doubtless she remembered how she had scoffed at Chanticleer for thinking that his dream was a warning, and held herself partly to blame for disaster overtaking him.

The widow and her two daughters heard the outcry and hurried out of the cottage just in time to see the fox make off with Chanticleer.

Then loudly crying, " Alas ! alack-a-day !—Ha, ha, the fox ! " they started in swift pursuit, followed by several men with staves, who were attracted by their shouts, and by many friends and neighbours. There was Talbot and Garland and Malkin with the distaff still in her hand, and soon the whole farmyard was astir with the unusual hubbub. Cole, the sheep-dog, joined in barking wildly ; the cow and the calf and the pigs, terrified by the barking and shouting, rushed wildly to and fro ; the ducks quacked as though their last hour had come ; the geese flew over the tree-tops in their terror, and even the bees flew out of their hives.

As the confusion increased all the neighbourhood rushed to the scene, blowing brass trumpets and wooden horns, shouting and whooping, until there never was such a noise and disturbance.

Meanwhile the fox was trotting off towards his house, holding Chanticleer by the back in his mouth.

And now, my good friends, I pray you hearken well, and you will learn how fortune suddenly turned for these two.

In spite of his terror as he lay in the fox's mouth, Chanticleer addressed him in a very knowing way.

"Sir, if I were in your place," he said, "I should defy this crowd who are in pursuit. Now that you are come into the wood, I should say, 'A pest upon you all! now that I have the cock safely, I am not going to let him escape for any one. Here in truth shall I eat him.'"

"Upon my word, so will I do," cried the fox, falling all unheeding into the clever Chanticleer's trap, for as soon as he opened his mouth to speak, out flew the bird and alighted on a tree, well out of his reach.

When the fox saw his mistake, he tried his best to undo it.

"Alas! Chanticleer," he said, "I did you a wrong, inasmuch as I frightened you when I carried you out of the yard. But indeed, sir, I did it with no ill intent. Come down, I pray, and I will explain the matter to you. I will tell you the whole truth, I promise you."

"No, thank you," said Chanticleer from the place of safety. "I am not to be caught twice. Never again shall I be led by your flattery to sing and to blink. For he who winks wilfully when he ought to use his eyes deserves not to thrive."

The fox, thus outwitted, said,—

"Let him, on the other hand, thrive badly who has so little self-command as to speak, as I did, when he ought to have held his peace."

Thus each of the two animals learnt, so we may

suppose, a lesson which would last for their lives; and if you think this tale of a Fox, a Cock, and a Hen mere foolishness, I would ask you to search beneath it, and you may find that there is a lesson in it also for men and women.

THE CLERK OF OXFORD

A CLERK there was, from Oxford, in the press,
Who in pure logic placed his happiness.
His horse was lean as any garden rake ;
And he was not right fat, I undertake ;
But hollow looked, and sober, and ill fed.
His uppermost short cloak was a bare thread,
For he had got no benefice as yet,
Nor for a worldly office was he fit ;
For he had rather have at his bed's head
Some twenty volumes, clothed in black or red,
Of Aristotle and his philosophy,
Than richest robes, fiddle, or psaltery.
But though a true philosopher was he,
Yet had he little gold beneath his key ;
But every farthing that his friends e'er lent,
In books and learning was it always spent ;
And busily he prayed for the sweet souls
Of those who gave him wherewith for the schools.
He bent on study his chief care and heed ;
Not a word spake he more than there was need,
And this was said with form and gravest stress,
And short and quick, full of sententiousness.
Sounding in moral virtue was his speech,
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.

R. H. HORNE.

THE CLERK OF OXFORD'S TALE

Part I

Towards the west of Italy, at the foot of the cold peak of Monte Viso, is a pleasant and fertile plain on which there stands many a fine town and palace built by princes in the olden days. The name of this fair land is Saluzzo, and there once lived a certain Marquis who reigned over the whole land, as his fathers for many generations had done before him.

This Marquis, whose name was Walter, was very greatly beloved both by high and low on his estate. He was quite a young man at the time of which I speak, and there was none in the whole of Lombardy of better lineage or fairer of person. His manner, too, was full of courtesy, and he ruled his country wisely and well; but with all these good points he was to blame in one respect. Now the reason for which I blame him was this, that amid all his prosperity he lived for the present alone, taking no heed of the future and of his duty to the State, but spending all his time in hunting and hawking, and other pleasures. And worst of all, this love of amusement made him disinclined to take a wife, though for reasons of state it was advisable that he should marry.

Now on this point his people felt so sore that at last one day a crowd of them sought his presence, and the

oldest and wisest amongst them, speaking for the rest, addressed him thus :—

" Most noble Marquis, your kindness gives us courage to address you. Gracious lord, receive with gentleness our complaint when I tell you what distresses us. In this matter I have no more cause to speak than the rest, but as you have always shown me grace and favour, I dare the more boldly ask you to lend an ear to what I say."

He then told the Marquis that it was the urgent wish of his people that he should marry forthwith, adding that if he would assent to their wishes a wife should immediately be found for him from one of the noblest and wealthiest families in the land.

The Marquis Walter listened very carefully to all that was said, and at the end he promised to comply with the wishes of his people and marry with the least possible delay ; for though he would have preferred to remain free and unfettered, he saw that it was but reasonable that his people should wish him to have a wife. On one point, however, he refused to accede to what they said, and this was that the choice of his wife should rest with them.

" Let me alone in the choosing of my wife," he said to them, " for that is a charge I would prefer to undertake myself. Since at your request I forgo my liberty, I will at least only wed where my heart is set, and choose as my wife one whom I truly love. In return, I charge you by your life to worship and honour the lady of my choice all her days as much as though she were an emperor's daughter, and that you never complain of my choice. Now do you assent to this ? because if so, let us consider the matter decided, and speak of it no more."

One and all consented right willingly to the condi-

tions of the Marquis, for they were too much filled with joy at the prospect of his marrying to do aught else. They only begged as one more boon that he would fix as early a day as possible for the wedding, so afraid were they lest he might even yet change his mind.

The Marquis made no difficulty about this, but then and there fixed a day which seemed to him suitable on which he would without fail be married; and after thanking him on their knees, the deputation went to their homes filled with rejoicing.

Meanwhile the Marquis gave immediate orders to his knights and squires and others about the Court to make all ready for the marriage feast.

Part II

Not far from the lordly palace where lived the Marquis Walter, and where preparations for a great feast were now going on, there was a little hamlet beautifully situated, where a few poor hard-working people kept their flocks and toiled in the fields. Amongst them was a man named Janicula, who was considered the poorest of them all, and he had one very fair daughter named Griselda. This young maiden Griselda, though, as I say, very fair to look upon, was even more fair if we speak of beauty of the mind, for then indeed would it be hard to find her equal under the sun. The simple manner of her upbringing allowed no foolish or frivolous ideas to creep into her head, and in all respects she sought to follow virtue. Though but of tender age, she already had taken to hard work,

and she had moreover an unusually wise judgment for her years, and in addition she took the most loving care of her poor old father.

All the day through Griselda was hard at work, for she never allowed herself a minute's idleness. She had a few sheep, and while she took them to pasture, she would at the same time be spinning; and when she came home she would bring with her such simple herbs as she could find growing wild, and by careful preparation turn them into soup. But when night came, she was glad to lay herself on her bed, hard though it was, for anything of ease or luxury was unknown to Griselda. Above all, she showed her father all the care and served him with all the diligence that was possible from a child to a parent.

Thus did the maiden Griselda perform her humble duty faithfully and well, little dreaming as she did so of the destiny in store for her.

The preparations for the Marquis Walter's wedding feast had all been completed, and the actual day of the wedding had come; but to the wonder and, indeed, the dismay of all, no mention had yet been made of any bride. In private those about the palace discussed the matter with sorrowful shakes of the head, and much misgiving.

"Alas! alas!" they said, "will our lord not marry any one then, after all? Alas that he should thus deceive us!"

Yet in spite of these gloomy forebodings, the preparations for the bride still went on. Not only was the feast ordered, but costly wedding garments were actually prepared for the unknown lady, jewels in settings of gold or enamel were made into brooches and rings, and all other ornaments suitable for the occasion put in readiness. And yet the very day fixed for the wedding

had come, and none knew or guessed who the bride was to be.

Little did anybody dream that the lady on whom the Marquis had set his affection and resolved to make his wife was the simple maiden Griselda, in the hamlet close by. But such indeed was the case.

Often as he rode out hunting had the young Marquis seen the maiden at the door of her father's cottage, or as she spun while tending her sheep in the meadows, and all unknown to her he had been much struck by her beauty and by the modesty of her demeanour. He had always treated her with courtesy, never staring at her rudely, but nevertheless he allowed his eyes to linger long in her direction when he saw her, and all that he noticed confirmed him in his feeling that she was as good as she was fair.

And now noon of the very day fixed for the wedding had actually come. The whole palace had been a scene of bustle and confusion for days, but now all was in order, and the festive board was spread with the rarest and most costly dainties which Italy could produce. The Marquis then appeared in the most splendid array, surrounded by all the great nobles and ladies whom he had bidden to his feast ; and accompanied by the merry sounds of music, he set forth for the humble village where Griselda dwelt.

Griselda, little dreaming of the fate in store for her, had been out early to draw some water from the well, and she hoped that by hurrying through with her work she might spare just a few minutes to stand with other girls at the door and catch a glimpse of the Marchioness as she went by, and thus have a small and humble share in the festivity ; for she had heard of course that the Marquis was to be married that day, and was eager to see the bride.

As she was hurrying back with her pitcher of water she was startled to hear her own name called by the Marquis, who had arrived at the cottage door just as

she herself had done. She placed her pitcher down in the ox-stall which was at hand, and turning to where he stood, sank on her knees before him while she waited to hear his will.

"Griselda," he said in grave accents, "where is your father?"

"Within, my lord, and close at hand," she answered, and led him to Janicula, with whom she left him, and withdrew.

When they were alone together, the Marquis took the astonished Janicula by the hand and addressed these words to him,—

"Janicula, I neither may nor can any longer conceal what is in my heart. With your consent, I would wed your daughter and cherish her as my wife for the rest of her days. You love me and are my faithful liegeman, I know well, and are in all things desirous to do my will. That which pleaseth me will I think therefore please you. Now tell me, then, will you have me for your son-in-law?"

At first Janicula was too much overcome to be able to speak, and stood red and shaking before the Marquis. Then he said,—

"My lord, as you know, your will is mine in all things. Are you not my master? and therefore in this matter, as in all others, it is for you to do as you wish."

"Very well, then," said the Marquis; "call in the maiden, and let us all three discuss the matter together. I would ask her in your presence if she is willing to be my wife, and order herself according to my wishes. And all that I have to say to her I wish to be said in your presence, and not behind your back."

So then Griselda was called in to them. She had been waiting patiently at the door near by, while wondering at the great honour done them by the visit of the Marquis, but little guessing its real object; and

now pale with wonder, and with modest downcast glances, she obeyed the summons.

"Griselda," said the Marquis to her, "it pleaseth both myself and your dear father here that I should wed you; and this shall therefore take place if, as I suppose to be the case, you too are willing. But first of all I would ask you a few questions, and it is for you to decide whether you will agree at once to what I ask, or whether you choose to delay, since the matter is somewhat hurried. Will you hold yourself in readiness to submit to my will and to obey me in everything, and never to utter complaint whatever I may do? Will you also undertake never to contradict me either in words or by your manner? If you will swear to abide by these two conditions, then will I swear to our alliance."

Filled with wonder and fear at this speech, Griselda nevertheless made reply,—

"My lord, I feel how unworthy I am for the honour of being your wife; but as you indeed wish for this, my will is yours. Here then do I swear that never willingly in thought or deed will I disobey you."

"Enough, enough, Griselda mine," quoth the joyful Marquis, moving to the door of the cottage, where all the company of his guests and courtiers awaited him. Throwing it open, he faced them all, and pointing to Griselda in her shabby cotton gown, he said,—

"This is my wife who stands before you. I pray all who love me to hold her in love and honour too. I have said my say."

Then he ordered the ladies of the Court to bring the costly robes prepared for his bride to the cottage, and there to divest Griselda of her coarse clothing and put them upon her, for he did not wish her poverty-stricken garments to be taken to the palace. She was to leave them behind her as she did her poverty, and enter her new home clad as befitted his wife.

The ladies did not much care for the task of removing the peasant girl's homely garments. Disdainful glances and muttered complaints accompanied their task; nevertheless they dared not disobey the Marquis, and soon Griselda was entirely reclothed. The long flowing locks of her fair hair which hung loosely on her shoulders they also combed and dressed with delicate touch, and on her head they placed a coronet. Other costly jewels were hung on her person, and soon no one would have recognized the humble village maid in her new and rich attire.

The wedding then took place; and as soon as the vows were exchanged, and the ring made for the purpose placed by the Marquis on Griselda's finger, he set her on a snow-white horse, and, accompanied by joyful crowds, brought her home to his palace. Revels and feasts then filled up the remainder of the day.

Now further to continue this story, I must tell you that the new Marchioness was so highly favoured by Heaven that trace of her humble origin soon ceased to be seen. Indeed, she filled her new position with so much grace and dignity, and was so fair to look upon, that one would have more readily supposed her to

have been brought up in an emperor's palace than in a peasant's humble cottage. Even those who had known her all her life were amazed at the rapid change in her, and could hardly believe that she was indeed the daughter of the poor old Janicula whom they knew so well.

At the same time, those among whom her lot was now cast soon learnt to love her as greatly as her earlier associates had done. Virtuous she had ever been, and her good fortune seemed but to make her grow still more excellent; she was so discreet and kindly and gracious, and in every way worthy of esteem, that she won the hearts of all.

Soon the report of her virtue and beauty spread through the countryside, and men and women of all ages came to Saluzzo from far and wide in order to see the Lady Griselda of whom they had heard so much.

Not only this, but Griselda knew all the homely duties of a wife so thoroughly that if any of her people came to her in distress, she could always advise them well; and if there was quarrel or strife in the land, she was always able to appease it and bring about harmony and peace again. She seemed the very incarnation of wisdom; and when her husband was away, if any difference took place between the men of the district, whether of high or low degree, she could soon heal the breach. Her judgments were so just and her words so wise that every one said that she might have been sent direct from Heaven to help mankind and right all wrongs.

Thus was the Marquis Walter wedded humbly, yet royally in a sense; and not only was he content and happy in his home, but his wise choice showed the people that he had the sense to see that virtues were independent of rank or wealth, and proved to them that he was a wise and prudent man. Such men are rare, and they esteemed Marquis Walter accordingly.

After a time the happiness of Walter and Griselda was further increased by the birth of a little daughter. Certainly they would have preferred a boy to succeed to his father's title and estates when the time came, but the little girl was welcome nevertheless, and both parents loved her very dearly.

Part III

Now just when all seemed to be going so well, and the happiness of Walter and Griselda to be complete, there entered into the heart of the former a longing to put the patience and obedience of his wife to a test. He had already done so more than once, but on each occasion she had stood firm to the promise made by her on the day of her marriage, that neither in word nor deed would she ever gainsay him or contradict his wishes. What a pity it seems that the Marquis could not have been satisfied with this, and not attempted to try her further! She had shown herself in all things willing to comply with his wishes, and yet he had this strange longing to tempt her further. Some of his admirers certainly have praised him for the ingenuity and subtlety he displayed in this way, but I, for my part, hold it no merit in him, but the reverse, to tempt his wife to disobey him, and to cause her all the anguish and fear which now came upon her.

We shall now see how he put his plans for testing Griselda into execution.

One night when she was in bed, with her infant daughter in a cot at her side, and no one else in the room, he came to her with a stern and troubled countenance, and addressed her in the following manner:—

"Griselda, I suppose that you have not forgotten

the day when I took you out of your poverty and placed you in your present lofty position ; and I hope that this is so, and that your present dignity has not made you forgetful of the past and of the humble condition in which I found you.

" You know without my reminding you in what manner, not so very long ago, you came into this house ; and though I myself honour and love you, this is not the case with my nobles. To them it is a continual source of shame that they should be subject to one of such lowly birth as yourself, and they often complain among themselves about it. Especially has this been the case since your little daughter was born. Now, I must be very careful not to increase this feeling among them ; as you will understand, it is very important for me that I should live with my nobles in peace and harmony, and that we should be on friendly terms. I must therefore act towards my child, not as I should like to do, but as seems best for the State. God knows I do so with great reluctance, but since it must be, I would not act without letting you know and gaining your consent. Now is the opportunity to prove by your deeds the truth of the words you spoke to me on our wedding-day, when you promised to obey me in all things, and to prove the extent of your patience."

On hearing her lord's words no change came over the face of Griselda ; she had schooled herself so well that not a trace of all she was feeling showed itself in either her eyes, her expression, or her words. Meekly she made answer,—

" My lord, whatever you wish, my child and I will heartily obey. Are we not yours to do as pleaseth you with us ? I desire nothing but what you wish in all things. For my own part, all I desire is thyself ; the one thing I should dread to lose is thee. And in this nothing shall change me or cause my courage to alter."

When the Marquis found that Griselda responded so well to the test he had put upon her, he was really very much pleased ; but he did not show this as, with a melancholy countenance, he left the room. A few minutes after he had sought out a trusted messenger —a sergeant—and told him in great secrecy what he wished him to do.

The sergeant, in obedience to the order of the Marquis, went to Griselda's room, and with slow, solemn pace entered it and stood at her bedside.

" Madam," he said, " you must forgive me for doing what I am constrained to do ; for, as you know, a servant must obey his master, and so must I. There is no more to be said. I am commanded to take away your child."

With that he took Griselda's infant daughter from its cot and started to carry it away.

So rough were his actions and so suspicious his manner that Griselda made up her mind that he was about to kill the child. Her vow to submit to her husband and her trust in him kept her silent while the baby was being snatched from its cot at her side ; but now when she saw it being borne away, her mother's feelings overcame her, and she implored the messenger to allow her to kiss it first. The messenger did not refuse this, and the baby was placed in her arms, and Griselda covered the tiny face and body with kisses.

" Farewell, my child," she cried. " Thou goest surely to thy death, and I shall never see thy sweet face again. May our Saviour's blessing rest on thee, and to Him do I commend thee, my daughter."

As she spoke these words she rocked and soothed the infant, and then with calm manner gave her back to the messenger.

" Here, take again this tiny maiden," she said.

"Go and fulfil my lord's commands. One thing alone I ask—that her body may be buried reverently, and in a place of safety."

But even as to this request the sergeant made no promise. He took the baby in silence, and without further speech left the room.

The sergeant then immediately sought out his master, bearing the infant with him, and told him all that had passed, and every word that Griselda had spoken; and on hearing of her continued patience and obedience, the Marquis could not prevent some signs of pity and emotion from showing themselves. Nevertheless, he was still far from relenting, and as determined as ever to carry out his merciless plan to its conclusion.

But his intention was not really so cruel as he made it appear to Griselda, though in truth it was cruel enough. He had never really intended, as she supposed, to have his infant slain, but only to hide it from her; and he now ordered the sergeant to take it with every care, but in all secrecy, to his sister, the Countess Panago, who lived at Bologna. To her the whole story of the child's parentage was to be told, and she was to be entreated to bring it up kindly and suitably to its birth, but to tell no one the truth concerning it.

So the sergeant bore the unconscious infant away to her aunt in Bologna, where she was taken care of secretly for many a day; and meanwhile the Marquis watched Griselda very closely to see whether her manner and conduct were altered in any way by what had happened. But for all his watching he could discover no change in her. She was just the same kind, gentle lady that she had ever been to him, always ready to render him any service, and never by word or look complaining. Only one change had taken place in her, and that was that she never by any chance, either in sorrow or in jest, mentioned the name of her little daughter.

Part IV

Thus four more years passed for Walter and Griselda, and at the end of that time there were great rejoicings, for now a little son and heir was born to them. The child was of great beauty, and began even in infancy to show signs of a noble disposition, and his birth was a matter of much joy throughout the land.

Surely the Marquis might now have been content to leave the happiness of his faithful wife undisturbed! But not so.

When the child had reached the age of two he was again seized with suspicions of his wife's fidelity to her vow, and the determination to test her once more overcame him again.

How needless it was to do so! But there seemed no measure to the tests of her endurance which he wished to apply. It was as though nothing could convince or satisfy him, and he now adopted a plan as cruel as the former one.

"Wife," he said to her one day, "you have heard before how amiss the people took our marriage, and I find that since I have had a son to succeed me, this feeling has become much stronger. Never in my life have I known it so great as it now is. The mutterings of discontent seem to daunt my courage and slay all my happiness. What I hear them whisper on all sides is, 'When Walter is dead and gone, are we to have a grandson of the old peasant Janicula to rule over us?' Such words do my people indeed say, and plainly I cannot let such complaining pass unheeded. I fear their insolence, though so far they have not spoken plainly in my presence. I fain would live in

peace, and therefore I have decided to act secretly towards our son even as I did to his sister. I warn you of this, lest, taken unawares, you might show some unwonted display of feeling. Now bear this matter patiently, I pray."

Then Griselda, remembering her vow, and that above all things she must remain true to it, made answer,—

"As I have said before and always shall say, I have no will of my own. In all things I submit it to yours. You are the master both of myself and of our children, and have the right to do what pleaseth you with your own. For as I left my old clothing behind me when I came to you, so also I left my will and my liberty. If I could know your wishes before you tell them to me, I would carry them out unbidden; but as it is, now that I know them, I will be firm and obedient to them. Indeed, if I thought that my own death would please you, right gladly would I give up my life."

Then the Marquis cast down his eyes, and his face grew sad as he marvelled at Griselda's patience and fidelity, but nevertheless there was a secret joy in his heart at finding that she stood his test so well.

Thus a second time did the same ugly sergeant who had borne away the baby girl come to Griselda. This time he seized the little boy, and sad though the parting had been before, this one seemed even worse. The baby girl had been but an infant, but the boy was now of an age which made the pain of losing him even greater, and he was, as I have said before, of great beauty and grace.

With outward calm Griselda kissed him and gave him her blessing, and she prayed the sergeant that if, as she supposed, he was to be slain, he would see that

he was buried in a grave too deep for wild or savage animals to molest. But again the sergeant made no reply. He seized the child roughly and bore it away as though to do it injury, but he had his secret instructions all the time, and the boy was conveyed with every care to Bologna, and placed in the keeping of the same aunt who had charge of his sister.

Even under this second heavy blow Griselda kept her calm and patient demeanour. Indeed, the carefully observant Marquis would have been inclined to think that she had not really cared very much for her children had he not seen her devotion to them for himself beforehand. But this he had seen, and he knew that she loved them next to himself, and that her steadfast expression and calm manner only hid a sorely aching heart, though those who knew her less well might think her hard and cold.

And now I would ask if such trials as he had caused Griselda to endure were not enough to prove to any husband that she was constant and patient? I am sure that any woman would say at once that this was so, and that the most obstinate husband could hardly devise fresh means of testing his wife. All the same, the Marquis Walter was even yet not satisfied, and his restless, suspicious nature began once more to think of tests for Griselda. The fact is, he was one of those people who when they take up an idea get so carried away with it that they do not seem able to stop, and stick to their first intention as if they were tied to it as securely as a man is when bound to a stake.

For some time the Marquis satisfied himself with observing Griselda very closely, just as he had done

after her little daughter was taken from her. But he was no more able to discern any change in her now than he had been then, and it really seemed as though the older she grew the more faithful she was to him, if that were possible. Indeed it appeared as though there was but one will between her and her husband, so entirely did she make hers submit to his own.

At the same time, the Marquis was beginning to be held in ill-repute by every one. The report that he had murdered both his children because his wife was low-born spread far and wide ; and as he was held in evil odour because of this, his own people began to look askance at him, for they had no means of knowing that it was untrue.

Thus the love that had been felt towards him was rapidly turning to hate ; but as the Marquis perceived this, it seemed but to drive him on to persecute his wife still more.

Of all the trials to which he had subjected Griselda, the one he now prepared was perhaps the most cruel.

Her two children had been torn from her, as we have seen, and she had borne this submissively as being her husband's will, and trusted him and remained true to him in spite of everything, and now he was about to aim a blow at her very love for himself, and pretend to wish no longer to have her as his wife. For this purpose he actually had a bill or decree prepared, which he pretended came from the Pope ; and in this document permission was given to him to send Griselda away, and take another wife in order to stop the complaints and dissensions of his people.

The report of this soon spread, and the truth of it was not doubted ; and one can imagine the pangs of dismay which the rumour aroused in Griselda herself, though she hid them with her usual fortitude and power of endurance.

All this time the Marquis went on working out his plans. A secret messenger was sent with a letter to

the Earl of Panago at Bologna, and the result was that he shortly afterwards set out with Griselda's two children on their way to Saluzzo.

It was now twelve years since the little girl had been taken from her mother, and the instructions that the Earl had was to disclose to no one who she really was, but to cause it to be given out that she was on her way to wed the Marquis of Saluzzo.

So the sweet young daughter of Griselda, all ignorant of her own parentage, was brought in great state towards Saluzzo, accompanied by her uncle the Earl, her little brother, now a fine boy of seven, and a goodly array of nobles.

Part V

While Griselda's two children were thus journeying towards their father's palace, Griselda herself, who of course had long mourned them as dead, knew nothing of their approach.

And now the blow which had been threatening her was struck, and she was to be driven forth from her husband's home.

On a certain day the Marquis caused a court to assemble, and sent for Griselda to appear before it. There, in the presence of all, he told her of the bill which he pretended was from the Pope, and announced that for the sake of peace he had decided to act on it, and that in fact his new wife was already hastening on her way to him.

Certainly he did not put this to her as cruelly as he might have done, for he had the grace to say that he had enjoyed great happiness in having her as a wife on account of her virtue, and he attributed it to State reasons, and to the fact of her humble origin alone, that he was about to make the change.

But his words must have sounded very cold to the

poor lady's ears, and the advice with which he wound up could give her little consolation.

"Be strong of heart," he said, "and leave your place empty for your successor. Return to your father's house with the dowry you brought with you, and remember no one can always know prosperity. Bear this stroke of fortune with courage."

"My lord," she said, "I have always known the great difference between us in rank. I never deemed myself to be high enough to be your wife, nor even your waiting-maid, and truly I have ever held myself more as your humble servant than as your lady. I thank both you and our heavenly Father for the honour with which I have been treated in a position for which I was all unworthy. There is no more to say. I will now gladly return to my father, and dwell with him for the rest of my life. As for your future wife, may the God of grace grant you both happiness and prosperity. To her I will gladly yield the place where I have been so happy, since it pleaseth you."

Thus did Griselda once more submit to her husband's will in this the greatest test of all.

The Marquis had, as we heard, offered her back the dowry which she had brought with her, and this Griselda understood rightly to mean that she was to take nothing but the poor clothes she had worn on the day of her wedding before they had been exchanged for the costly raiment supplied by the Marquis. She spoke of this now, and her words were so touching that even the Marquis was overcome with pity and sympathy when he heard them. This is what she said,—

" Now as you proffer me the dowry that I brought," she said, " I understand you to mean the poor garments which were all I then had, and these would now be difficult to find."

And here the memory of that happy day long ago, when the Marquis had sought her as his bride, came over poor Griselda, and the contrast between it and her present misery caused the words to break from her,—

" Great Heaven! how gentle and how kind you seemed both in speech and by your countenance on that day when our marriage was made. Alas how different is love when it grows old from what it was at first! "

She then reminded him how she had taken off her poor clothing before she left her father's cottage.

" To you," she said, " I brought naught else but faith and purity. The rich clothing that you gave me I return, and my wedding ring. The rest of my jewels are in my chamber for you to take. Naked out of my father's house I came, and naked I return. All I ask for is one simple smock, such as I was wont to wear."

" The one you had on your back that day shall be yours again, and you shall take it away with you," said the Marquis. His words sounded gruff and curt, and he was obliged to turn hurriedly away to hide his emotion, and could not utter another word.

And yet, in spite of his pity and admiration, he went on with the miserable deception, and let Griselda believe that all was as he had made it appear.

Then Griselda made ready to leave the palace, and return to the humble home of her childhood. All her costly clothing was cast aside, and with bare feet and head, and clad only in the simple smock such as she had brought from her father's house, she stepped forth to return thither.

As she went the people followed her, weeping bitterly, for she was much beloved by all; Griselda alone remained dry-eyed and silent.

When Janicula had heard what had happened, he cursed the day that he was born, and bitterly deplored that the marriage had ever taken place. He had all along had a feeling that the Marquis would repent of marrying a poor maiden, and that disaster would follow, and now he felt that he had been right.

He came forth to meet Griselda weeping bitterly, when the sound of the people accompanying her told him of her approach, and together they entered the humble cottage which had been Griselda's early home.

Here for a short space she dwelt again, and never by look or word did she show sense of injury. Nor did she show that she held her high estate as the wife of the Marquis in remembrance. She filled her place in this humble sphere once more as nobly and as well as she had done that of a Marchioness.

Men may speak of the patience of Job, and scholars tell us of the humility sometimes shown by men, but of a truth, though less is said of women in this respect, no man has ever been as humble or half as true as a woman can be, unless there is some fresh case of it which has not come to my knowledge.

Part VI

While Griselda was thus living a life of humble toil in the cottage where she had been born, and had in all respects returned to her former condition as a simple peasant, her young daughter, whom she supposed to be dead, was slowly journeying towards Saluzzo. Before long rumours reached the people that the Earl of Panago was approaching, bringing under his escort the new bride for the Marquis, who was accompanied

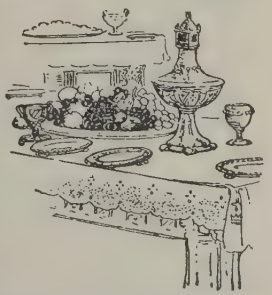
by so magnificent a retinue that such an array had never before been seen in Lombardy.

When they drew near, the Marquis sent for Griselda, who came at his bidding with a humble heart, yet rejoicing, nevertheless, to see her lord once more.

" Griselda," he said to her, as she knelt before him to give him greeting, " my will is that this maiden who is to be my wife shall be received right royally when she arrives here on the morrow. Now I have no woman about the palace whom I feel I can trust to arrange the rooms as I like them, and I have therefore sent for you to take charge of the household and see that all is in order for us. You know how I liked everything of old. Although your appearance is mean and ill to look upon, you can at any rate do your duty."

" Not only am I glad to do your will," she replied, " but I desire nothing better than to serve and please you ; nor shall the constant spirit in my heart ever cease to love you above all things, whether in weal or woe."

Whereupon she began to set to work to put the house in order—seeing that beds were made, tables laid, and urging on the housemaids with their sweeping and dusting everywhere, so that all might be ready when the bride arrived.



In the middle of the next morning the Earl Panago and the two children drew near, and at the news of their approach the people all flocked out to see them arrive ; and when they saw the rich array of the retinue, and beheld the beauty and grace of the young girl who rode in the midst, their fickle hearts caused them to think that the Marquis had done well to take her as bride in place of Griselda. So they beheld

the young girl and her brother with approving air, and whispered to each other that she was of nobler race than Griselda, and better fitted to be a marchioness. Only a few of the wiser inhabitants condemned the others for their fickleness, and knew that their idle talk was not worth a grain, realizing that those who would trust to the fleeting praises of the mob are but fools.

Griselda was busy up to the last moment putting the finishing touches to everything, and seeing that all was in fitting order to welcome the bride; then she too went to the gate with the rest of the people to give her welcome. No shame at her own coarse and somewhat worn clothing came upon her as with a cheerful countenance she went to meet the future Marchioness.

The guests now alighted and entered the palace, and Griselda busied herself once more seeing after their comfort and attending to their wants. Moreover, she did all this with such ease and grace that many a one wondered to see her in such poor apparel, and asked each other who she could be.

The banquet was then served, and all took their places at the board. The Marquis called to Griselda, who was busy superintending.

"Griselda," he said playfully, "what think you now of my new wife's beauty?"

"A fairer one I never saw," replied Griselda readily. "God grant her every blessing! One thing there is, though, I would entreat of you, and at the same time warn you about—that is, that you never harass this tender maiden with tormenting ways as you have sometimes done me. Remember that she was fostered more tenderly in her young

days, and much I fear she could not endure trouble as well as one brought up like myself among the humblest people."

Then the Marquis, touched beyond words by her continued docility, patience, and absence of all complaint, felt that the time had come to have done with the sorry pretence ; and indeed even he felt satisfied at last with the proofs of Griselda's constancy and patience.

" Enough, enough, Griselda mine," he cried. " Be now no more troubled or afraid. Thy faith and thy goodness, which are as great as ever existed in woman, have I now surely proved beyond all possible doubt both in your high and your humble position. Now in truth, dear wife, I am convinced of your steadfastness."

Then he took Griselda in his arms and kissed her passionately ; but Griselda remained dazed and unable to grasp his meaning, so sudden and startling was the change. She was as one just starting from a deep sleep.

" Griselda, by Him who dwells above, I swear that I have never had and never shall have any wife but thee," said the Marquis. " This maiden whom I allowed you to suppose was to be my bride is in fact no other than your own dear daughter, and the boy, her brother, is our son and heir. I have kept them in hiding at Bologna. Take them again, for this day I restore them to you. Be assured that, in spite of all that people may say as to my cruelty, I have played my part with the sole wish to test you."

As Griselda slowly took in the meaning of the Count's words, such a sudden wave of joy swept over

her that she fell in a deep swoon ; and as soon as she recovered, she called her long-lost children to her, and kissed them over and over again, while her tears of joy bathed their faces. Then again for very excess of joy she swooned, but even in her swoon she clasped her children in her arms so tightly that it was with difficulty they were released.

There was hardly a dry eye among those present at the touching sight, and many turned away unable to bear it. But as Walter soothed her and helped her to rise, she gradually grew calmer, and then it was a joyous sight to see the two together in happy reconciliation.

Her ladies then led Griselda away, and taking off her coarse clothing, arrayed her once more as befitted her rank. A gown of gold cloth was placed upon her, and on her head she wore a coronet sparkling with many a gem. Thus arrayed, she was led once more into the banqueting-hall, where all received her with the honour which was her due.

Thus had the day which broke so sadly for Griselda a most joyful ending. High revels and feastings took place in her honour, and lasted until the stars shone in the welkin, and greater and more sumptuous was the feast than even that on her wedding-day had been.

For many a year did Griselda and Walter reign together in peace and concord. They saw their daughter happily married to a good and worthy man, and their son also blest with a good wife, though he never put her to the same sad tests that his mother had experienced. As for Griselda's father, old Janicula, the Marquis had him brought to the palace, where he ended his days in rest and peace.

My story is ended, and the meaning of it is not that wives should copy Griselda's humility, for such humility as that should really not be permitted, but rather that every one in his degree should be as firm and patient under adversity as she was. It is for this reason that Petrarch has related the story. For surely, if a woman could be so patient and resigned under the trials sent by a mortal man, the more ought we to endure with patience those sent to us by an Almighty Power for our own good.

THE FRANKLIN

A FRANKLIN in this company appeared :
White as a daisy was this Franklin's beard.
With sanguine hues did his complexion shine.
Well loved he in the morn a sop in wine.
His days he gave to pleasure, every one ;
For he was Epicurus's own son,
Who held the opinion that a life of bliss
Was verily man's perfect happiness.
An householder of great extent was he ;
He was St. Julian in his own countrey.
With bread and ale his board was always crowned ;
A better cellar no where could be found.
His pantry never was without baked meat,
And fish and flesh, so plenteous and complete,
It snowed within his house of meat and drink.
Of all the dainties that a man could think,
After the sundry seasons of the year,
His meats thus changed he, and his supper cheer.
Full many a partridge fat had he in mew,
And many a bream and many a jack in stew.
Woe to his cook, unless his sauces were
Made piquant rich, and ready all his gear.
His table with repletion heavy lay
Amidst his hall, throughout the feast-long day.

Franklin, a large Freeholder and wealthy country gentleman.
St. Julian. This saint was eminent for providing his votaries with good lodgings and accommodations of all sorts.

At sessions there was he both lord and sire.
Full often time he had been Knight o' the Shire.
A dagger, and a purse of netted silk,
Hung at his girdle, white as morning milk.
Sheriff—comptroller—magistrate he'd been ;
A worthier franklin there was nowhere seen.

R. H. HORNE.

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE

LONG ago in the land of Brittany there lived a knight named Arviragus, who loved a fair lady named Dorigen, and devoted himself to her service. Many an adventure, many a great enterprise, did he undertake for her sake, though he had indeed but small hope of winning her. For be it said he was but a knight and she the most beautiful lady under the sun, who was sought in marriage by many of rich rank and high degree, so that the knight, for very fear of her scorn, refrained from telling her of his love and the pain it caused him.

But at length the lady herself took compassion on him, and touched by his valour and worth, and by his humbleness towards her, she told him of her own accord that she was willing to take him for her husband and lord.

This filled the knight with such unspeakable joy that he vowed, on his honour as a knight, to obey Dorigen in everything when they were married, so that their life together might be a truly blessed one.

"Never in all my life," he said, "will I go against your will. In all things your wishes shall rule me, and I will ever obey you as a true lover should do. The name of master will I alone keep for myself."

Dorigen was much touched by the words of her faithful knight, and for her part, she promised in return that no strife or discord should come between them, and that she would ever be a true and faithful and humble wife to him.

" Here is my troth for this," she wound up, " until my heart break."

Now the matter between them was thus most happily settled, since each was willing to give in to and to obey the other. For be sure that Love was never kept by force. When there is force, then Cupid, the little God of Love, shakes his wings, and—farewell, he is gone! Love must be free and voluntary, and those who love must each consider and give in to the other if their love is to last.

We have seen in the tale just told by the Clerk of Oxford what a virtue patience is, and how it enables people to overcome difficulties, and bear great trials ; and so it is with the small trials of everyday life too. Every one is sometimes hasty or bad-tempered, and says or does things that are wrong. But these small difficulties should be borne patiently, and people should not be constantly chiding each other for their faults. All of this was perceived by this couple, Arviragus and Dorigen, and consequently they were very happy together.

As soon as they were married Arviragus took his bride to his own estate at Penmark, near the old town of Caerrud, and there they dwelt in great bliss for a year and more. At the end of that time Arviragus began to long for an active life of warfare again, and decided to cross the sea, and in that other land of Britain, later to be called England, to seek the renown

of arms. For above all things Arviragus was a knight and a warrior, and dearly though he loved Dorigen, he could not be happy to spend all his life in idleness at her side.

So off he set for the land across the sea, and there he remained for two whole years.

We will not follow all the knightly adventures of Arviragus while he was absent. The story that concerns us is that of the fair Dorigen, left behind at Penmark. Sad indeed was the poor lady's condition, thus deprived of the husband whom she loved as her heart's life. Nothing was able to comfort her for his loss, and she wept and moaned, and would neither eat nor sleep. The longing to have him with her was so great that the whole of the world in comparison to it seemed naught. In vain her friends tried to console her by every means in their power. They reasoned with her, pointing out that she would die if she continued as she was, and tried their utmost to divert her mind and cheer her. For a time this had no effect; but no grief lasts for ever, and after a while that of Dorigen began to wear itself out, and the kindly offices of her friends gradually made an impression on her mind, though at first they seemed wasted. It was as when any one engraves an image on a stone. At first nothing is to be seen, but gradually the image appears as the work proceeds.

Letters, too, began to arrive from Arviragus in the distant land where he had gone, and these told her of his welfare, and above all, spoke of his speedy return, so that the spirits of Dorigen began to rise. Her friends saw signs of her recovery, and implored her on their knees to go for a country ramble with them to divert her mind; and after much persuasion Dorigen consented, for she felt that it was best to seek a little change of scene.

Now the castle where Dorigen dwelt was on a high cliff by the sea, and since her lord's absence she had

been nowhere but to the terrace in front of it. From there she would gaze over the wide expanse of tumbling waves and watch the ships go by — some sailing vessels with great sails, others barges worked by the oar — and this but added to her grief, and she would murmur to herself,—

"Alas! is there no ship of the many that I see that will bring my lord home to me? Would he but come, how the cruel pain at my heart would vanish!"

At other times she would sit on the edge of the terrace and gaze at the water with sad eyes, her heart quaking with fear as she watched the great breakers dash on the rocks below, and thought of the hundreds who had come to an untimely death in the angry waters. Then such a trembling would seize her that she could not stand, and a great terror and dislike of the cruel rocks would come over her, and an agonized prayer go up from her heart that her dear lord would be brought back in safety. And her prayer would wind up with many a tear, and the words,—

"Alas! these rocks slay my very heart for fear!"

Her friends saw how it was even worse for Dorigen to walk by the sea which caused such gloomy thoughts than to stay within the castle, and therefore, when at last they persuaded her, as we have said, to seek a little diversion in their company, they led her as far inland as they could, by meadows and clear streams, to a fair garden where no reminder of the angry sea and the cruel rocks could reach her.

Here they had made all arrangements for spending a pleasant day. Under the shady trees tables were

prepared, some with refreshments, and others with various games and pastimes, such as chess.

Everything was arranged to divert the mind and please the eye. I must tell you, too, that it was on the sixth day of May that they sought the garden, and this genial month had brought out all the flowers and the leaves on the trees in their first freshness; and not only had Nature done her utmost to make it fair, but the art of man had been employed, and the garden was so cunningly devised, and so full of fresh blossoms and sweet scents, that it was a veritable paradise where one would have thought that the heaviest heart in the world would have grown light and joyous.

But amidst all this beauty Dorigen remained sad and melancholy, still mourning for her husband.

After the company had dined at the tables spread for their enjoyment, the young men and ladies started to dance and sing on the greensward; but while they thus diverted themselves, Dorigen sat solitary and sad, taking no part in the amusement. For she cared not for dancing, since the one she loved was not with the revellers.

Among the young men who took part in the dance was a squire named Aurelius. He was as fresh and as bright in appearance as the month of May itself; and never since the world began was there any young man who could surpass his skill either in dancing or singing.

Youth, strength, virtue, wisdom, and wealth, all these were his. He was one of the best-looking and best-behaved men alive, and was beloved by everybody.

For some two years past this young Aurelius had been deeply in love with Dorigen, though all unknown to her, for he had never had the courage to tell her of his feelings, knowing right well that she cared for her husband alone, and would never listen to a tale of love from any other man. In his songs he would sometimes give vent to his trouble, and sing of how he loved a lady who did not return his affection, and of how he durst not tell her of his sorrow, but no mention of her name was ever made. Sometimes, certainly, when they met in the figures of a dance, he would cast wistful, longing glances in her direction, which were noticed by some of the onlookers, but Dorigen herself was unconscious of them the while.

Nevertheless, it happened on this particular day that they fell into conversation, such as might easily take place between two friendly neighbours who had lived near and known each other for some time. Suddenly, however, the feelings of Aurelius overcame him, and he began to tell Dorigen that he loved her.

"In truth, madam," he said, "if it could bring you any cheer, I would gladly that it had been I instead of Arviragus to go across the sea, and that I should never return; for well I know that my service for you is all in vain, and that a breaking heart is my only reward. Would to God that I might die here at your feet! I have no more to say. Have pity on me, sweet lady, lest I die."

Then Dorigen, who thus learnt for the first time of his love for her, made answer,—

"Now do I understand what your feeling is, and that you would have me promise to love you in return; but I declare to you that I will never, by word or thought, be false to my own true love and husband, for my heart is wholly his and can be given to no other."

Then seeing that Aurelius was filled with sorrow by reason of his hopeless love, she sought to turn his mind from it by means of a jest.

"Since you are so full of complaint," she added playfully, "I will promise to give you my hand and my heart on the condition that you clear away all the cruel rocks from the coast of Brittany. I repeat that when you have made the coast so clear of rocks that not one is to be seen, and there is no longer any danger of a ship being dashed to pieces on them, then and only then will I love you better than any man in the world. And this I give my solemn pledge and vow then to do."

"Is there no other chance but this?" he asked.

"No, indeed," she replied; "for well I know that this can never happen. Put your foolish notions out of your head, and remember that I am the faithful, loving wife of Arviragus, and that I cannot therefore give my heart to any one else."

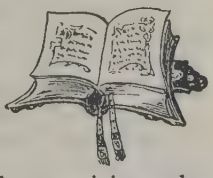
"Madam," said Aurelius, "since your love is not for me, would that I could on this instant die," and he turned away with a very sorrowful heart.

Dorigen's friends now came to seek her, and persuaded her to wander with them in the pleasant glades of the garden, and to join the other merry-makers, until at last the shades of approaching

night drove them all homeward. None of them had the least idea of the conversation which had just taken place between Dorigen and Aurelius; and as for Dorigen herself, she thought the whole matter was at an end, though, as we shall see, this proved not to be so.

Before very long Arviragus returned safe and sound with the comrades who had accompanied him, and in the joy of welcoming him back, and amid all the festivity that followed, the incident of Aurelius and his affection for her was entirely swept away from the mind of Dorigen. Once more she and Arviragus settled down to their old happy life, and Dorigen had no thought for any one but her own brave knight and husband.

Meanwhile Aurelius had fallen seriously ill as a result of his unreturned affection. The longing to have Dorigen's regard became so strong in him that day and night he prayed to the gods to perform some miracle so that the rocks on the coast of Brittany should disappear, and he could claim her in fulfilment of her vow. The only comfort he had was in a brother who was much attached to him, and who watched over him in his illness with great devotion and care, and to whom Aurelius had confided all the cause of his suffering, though none other knew it. This brother was a man of some learning, and he, in his perplexity as to how to obtain relief for the sad condition of Aurelius, happened to recollect that when as a youth he had been studying at the university of Orleans, he had come across a very strange book on magic which had been left on his desk by a fellow-student. Now in this book many wonderful stories were told of apparitions worked by magic, and of how the magician who understood the art could make sights appear and



disappear at will, such as streams with boats on them, or castles, or meadows of flowers, or even a fierce lion. Then it occurred to him that if by such means as this he could cause it to appear to his brother, if only for a day, that his prayers were answered and all the rocks on the coast swept away, perhaps it would ease his mind and help to cure his illness.

Thereupon he hastened to his brother's bedside and told him of the magician's book, and persuaded him to go to Orleans himself, and there find out more about the magic arts described in it.

To make a long story short, Aurelius started up at once from his bed of sickness and hastened to Orleans, filled with the hope of finding a remedy for his grief. When he and his brother were a mile or two from the city they met a young scholar roaming about by himself, who gave them a friendly greeting in the Latin tongue, and then, to their great surprise, added the astonishing words: "I know the cause of your coming." He then proceeded to tell them all their intentions in doing so.

Aurelius was much filled with delight at the magic powers displayed by the scholar in knowing all about his arrival and the object which had brought him. He sprang from his horse, and asked to be allowed to accompany him to his dwelling.

Here he was made quite at home, and treated with great hospitality. An abundance of good food was offered to him, and Aurelius thought that never in his life had he seen such a well-ordered house.

Before supper the magician, for such the scholar proved to be, gave him a wonderful display of his magic art.

First of all, a mighty forest appeared with park-like glades, and in this he saw no less than a hundred great

stags with huge antlers pursued and slain, some by hounds, and some by hunters with bows and arrows. This scene then gave place to a river on which falconers with their hawks pursued the heron. Again the scene changed, and this time it was a vast open plain on which knights jousted; and after this, behold, a dance appeared, and wonderful to relate, Dorigen herself was among the dancers, and Aurelius seemed to take part in it and to dance with her. Suddenly the magician thought that it was time to stop. He clapped his hands twice, and—farewell to the revel! The whole scene vanished, and they were back once more in the magician's study, from which of course they had never really moved at all.

The magician then called to his squire to ask if supper was ready.

"Sir," was the reply, "it is ready whenever you wish, and that you know right well."

"Very well, then," said the magician; "we will now sup, for even folks in love" (and here he glanced slyly at Aurelius) "must needs have rest and refreshment sometimes."

When supper was finished, Aurelius asked the magician to name the sum he would require for causing all the rocks on the coast of Brittany, from the mouth of the Gironde River to that of the Seine, to disappear by magic.

The magician named one thousand pounds as the very lowest sum he would accept; and Aurelius, filled with joy at the prospect before him, readily closed with this offer.

"A thousand pounds!" he cried gladly. "Why, that is a mere nothing to me, for right gladly would I

give the whole wide world if it were in my power. Consider the bargain concluded. You shall be paid the thousand pounds, I vow ; and look you, we must be off to-morrow, so do not delay to put the matter in hand."

It was with a joyful heart that Aurelius went to bed that night, and he rested better than for many a day, so filled with hope was he now that the magician had promised to do what he wished.

At daybreak the next morning he started forth to return to Brittany, taking the magician with him. All of this happened, so the book relates, in the cold, frosty month of December. Bitterly cold it was, and the dark and icy rain had destroyed all vestige of green in the fields. Christmas was, in fact, close at hand.

When they reached Penmark, Aurelius gave the magician no peace, but urged him to make employment of his magic arts without waste of time, threatening to run a sword through his heart if he did not do so.

So the magician set to work with spells and incantations, and with such success that for a week or two it really appeared that all the rocks on the coast had vanished utterly.

When this was accomplished, Aurelius hastened to Dorigen, and throwing himself at her feet, he reminded her of the solemn vow she had made to him : how she would give him her hand and her heart when the rocks had all disappeared from the coast of Brittany ; and he bade her to go forth and see how that the miracle had actually taken place, and he then claimed the fulfilment of her promise.

With this he left her, and Dorigen stood still with no drop of colour in her face, overcome with dismay. For truly, as she remembered, she had solemnly vowed to love Aurelius when, and only when, the rocks had been removed, never imagining for one wild moment that such a thing could ever take place.

For a day or two she was sunk in the deepest despair. Arviragus was away, and to no one did she confide the cause of her trouble, but she wept many bitter tears, often even swooning with grief and dismay, and many a plaint did she utter to herself in secret. For it seemed to her that there was no way of escape for her from dishonour save by death alone. On the one hand, she must be false and faithless to her husband, if she gave her heart to another; and on the other hand was the solemn vow to Aurelius. And she recalled instances from ancient history of brave women who had chosen rather to die than be dishonoured, and had almost decided to slay herself.

On the third morning Arviragus came home, and when he saw the signs of grief about Dorigen, he asked anxiously as to the cause. Upon this she began to weep more than ever, but at last she told him all the story.

"Is there aught else but this?" asked Arviragus gravely, when all was told.

"Nay, nay," sobbed the weeping Dorigen, "there is no more to tell. Is not what I have said already too much?"

"Then, my wife," he said very gravely, "what is done cannot be undone. On my faith, you must keep your promise, for God knows I would rather be stabbed to death for love of you than that you should break your solemn word. Truth is the highest thing that man can keep."

And here Arviragus began to weep himself, for the course to which he felt Dorigen to be bound in honour was very hard for him; and in urging her to the performance of her duty, as he deemed it, he was sacrificing all his own happiness, for he loved Dorigen very dearly.

" I forbid you on pain of death," he continued, " to explain this matter to any one. I will endure my grief as best I may, and hide any outward traces of it. And as for you, the promise that you have made you must keep in spite of suffering. You must now go to Aurelius and tell him that you will do so. He is to have your heart according to your vow."

Thereupon Arviragus called a squire and a maid to him, and bade them accompany Dorigen to the house of Aurelius, but even to them he gave no word of explanation as to this strange proceeding.

Still bitterly weeping, Dorigen was led from her husband's presence.

Now it chanced that she had not gone far in the town when she met Aurelius himself ; for the fact was that he was ever on the watch for her comings and goings, and as soon as he had seen her leave the castle he set out to meet her.

He greeted her right gladly, and asked whither she was bound ; and she made the half-distracted reply,—

" Whither my husband hath sent me in order, alas ! to keep the vow I made."

Then as Aurelius looked upon her grief, he began to feel a great compassion for her. Also he began to ponder on the nobility of Arviragus, who had chosen rather to part from Dorigen than to let her break her vow. As he thus pondered, all the noble side of Aurelius's nature suddenly began to stir. He saw what a mean action it was on his part to hold Dorigen to her vow, the fulfilment of which he had brought about by magic and trickery. He also saw how evil a thing it was for him to part a loving husband and wife for his own selfish happiness.

" Madam," he said to the astonished lady, " say to your Lord Arviragus that since I see his great nobility

in bidding you keep your vow to his own loss, and also since I see how great your distress is in doing it, I will release you from it. My troth I plight that I will never reproach you for your promise nor trouble you in any way again. Here I take my leave of the truest and best wife that I have ever known."

Dorigen fell on her knees at his feet to thank him, and then, with heart overflowing with joy and relief, hastened home to Arviragus with the great news.

Now be assured that when he heard it he rejoiced more than it is possible for me to tell. All I will add in conclusion as to these two is, that after this they lived together in perfect happiness for the remainder of their lives. Never was there anger between them; Arviragus cherished Dorigen as though she were a queen, and Dorigen was true to him in all things.

Of these two you will hear no more from me. Of Aurelius the story relates something further.

Now that he had given up the lady, the young man began to curse himself for his folly in employing a magician, and did not much like the idea of paying the thousand pounds that had been agreed upon between them.

For the fact was, that though he had been ready to promise anything or everything at the time to secure his wishes, a thousand pounds was a very serious matter to him, and would mean the selling of all his heritage, and his reduction to great poverty.

The dishonourable idea of not paying his debt was one which he would not entertain for a minute, but he hoped that perhaps the magician would consent to be paid by instalments if he undertook to give him

part at once, and the remainder on a certain day of each year until the whole was paid.

Accordingly he took all the money he had by him,

which came to about five hundred pounds, and with this he sought out the magician, and told him that he would pay the remaining five hundred in time if he would wait, swearing that the money should be forthcoming eventually, even if he were reduced to beggary.

"Otherwise," so he wound up, "shall I have to sell the whole of my heritage to pay my debt."

The magician replied,—

"Did I not keep the whole of my covenant with you?"

"Yes, that in truth you have done well and truly," he said.

"And hast thou won the lady thereby?" he asked.

"No, no," he replied, sighing sorrowfully, "that have I not."

"What was the cause?" asked the magician kindly. "Tell me openly if you can."

Then Aurelius told him the whole story, even as it is here set forth. He spoke of the nobility of Arviragus, who had rather lose the wife he loved than let her be false to her vow; and of Dorigen's grief and distress, and of how she would have preferred death to leaving her husband.

"In truth," so he wound up, "her vow was taken under false pretences, for she could never have imagined that the rocks could be made to disappear. And this, coupled with her great grief, caused me to take pity upon her and not hold her to her promise. Moreover, if Arviragus could be so noble as to send her to me, could I fail to act in like knightly manner?

So, freely as he sent her to me, thus freely did I send her back to him."

"My good brother," replied the magician, "each of you, I perceive, acted nobly to the other. You are but a squire and he a knight, yet you equalled him in the chivalry of your action. Now if this be so, God forbid that a poor scholar should be outdone by either, for why should he not also perform a gentle deed? Sir, I release you from the debt of a thousand pounds. Not one penny will I take from you either for my skill or my trouble. You are as free from the debt as though we had never met. You paid me well for your food at my house—that is quite enough; and now farewell, and God be with you!"

Upon this he mounted his horse, and set forth on his way homewards.

Thus ended the Franklin's tale, which he had gathered from the old songs sung by the minstrels of Brittany.

Turning to the company, he said,—

"Now, my lordings, this question would I put to you: Which of the characters in my story think you was the most generous? Tell me before we wend further. I have no more to say, for my story is ended."

THE MAN OF LAW

A SERJEANT of the LAW, wise, wary, arch,
Who oft had gossiped long in the church porch,
Was also there, full rich of excellence.
Discreet he was and of great reverence ;
For such he seemed, his words were all so wise.
Justice he was full often in assize ;
By patent and commission from the crown,
For his keen science and his high renown.
Of fees and robes he many had, I ween :
So great a purchaser was nowhere seen.
All was fee simple to him, in effect ;
His rightful gainings no one could suspect.
So busy a man as he no circuit has ;
And yet he seemèd busier than he was.
He had at tip of tongue all cases plain,
With all the judgments, since King William's reign.
He likewise could indite such perfect law,
None in his parchments could pinch out a flaw :
And every statute he knew well by rote.
He rode but homely in a medley coat,
With band of twilled silk round the loins made fast :
On his array no more time shall I waste.

R. H. HORNE.

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

Part I

Many years ago, in the far-off eastern country of Syria, there dwelt a company of honest, reliable merchants who dealt in cloth of gold, rich satins, and spices, and whose merchandise was in such good repute that there was great demand for it both at home and abroad.

At last they determined to push their trade as far as the great city of Rome, and urged both by motives of business and of pleasure, the chiefs among them resolved to trust the matter to none of their inferiors, but to travel to Rome in their own person. There they arrived in due course, and having found suitable lodging, they settled down in the city for some considerable time.

Now it happened that the Emperor reigning there at the time had a fair daughter named Constance, whose virtue and beauty were the common topic of conversation. Day after day the foreign merchants heard the praises of this fair princess sung on every side. Men spoke of her as being beautiful, yet not proud ; young, but with none of the follies of youth,

full of tender pity and help for distress, and of a most gracious courtesy. All this description was in fact quite true, as the merchants were soon convinced.

When in course of time they had disposed of the goods brought with them from Syria, and their ships were laden with good return cargoes, the merchants proceeded to bid farewell to Rome, and returned to Syria. On their arrival they were sent for by the Sultan of the country, who was always eager to learn all he could of other lands ; and among all that they had seen or heard of while away, the merchants dwelt specially on the glowing accounts of Constance. So faithful a picture did they give of her, indeed, that the Sultan became attracted by the thought of her virtue and beauty to such an extent that he ardently desired to have her as his wife. And so intense did this wish become that he summoned his privy councillors, and informed them of it, telling them plainly that unless he had his will in this matter he would be no better than a dead man, and asking them to suggest some way out of the difficulty.

Then all the wise men of the council put their heads together to see what could be done. Much argument and quarrelling took place, and all kinds of cures, including magic and sorcery, were suggested ; but in the end they came to the conclusion that the only sure remedy would be for the Sultan to have his wish and marry Constance.

But here another difficulty arose. Marriage between a Mohammedan prince and a Christian princess was not an easy matter to accomplish, for, as one of the councillors pointed out, " No Christian prince would ever consent to his child obeying the laws of Mohammed."

Then the Sultan, who saw the truth of this, straightway made answer,—

" Very well, then ; but rather than lose Constance, I will myself become a Christian, for marry her I

must ; so I pray you to cease your arguments and help me to win her."

After this there were many embassies to Rome and many treaties discussed ; the intervention of the Pope was sought, and at last the Emperor consented to the marriage between his daughter and the Sultan, on condition that he and his courtiers, and in time all his subjects, should be baptized and embrace the Christian religion.

Great preparations were speedily made in Rome, and a large body of attendants, including bishops, lords, ladies, and knights, were chosen to accompany the bride to her new home. And meanwhile the fair Constance wept bitterly at the fate which awaited her, and mourned deeply at the thought of leaving her home and friends for a foreign land and a husband she had never seen.

In pitiful accents she bade farewell to the parents who had consented to this cruel fate for her ; but she knew that tears and entreaties would be useless, since her marriage had been decided upon by the two States, and resigned herself as well as she could to her hard fate.

At last the fatal, woeful day dawned, which was to see her departure from Rome, and she was led in pompous state to the ship which awaited her. With a brave spirit, though with an aching heart, she bade her friends farewell.

" Now Jesu Christ be with you all," she said ; and when in reply came the simple words, " Farewell, fair Constance," she was able to force a smile in response.

Thus did the fair and virtuous princess leave her home and kindred for the unknown and barbarous

land of her future husband. Alas! that there was no wise man in Rome who, with power to see into the future, might have bid the Emperor pause ere he allowed her to sail.

Part II

Constance and her followers reached the Syrian land in safety, and on hearing of their arrival, the Sultan sent word to his mother, bidding her go at once to receive his bride with a costly array.

Now this order the Sultan's mother at once obeyed, and with a great concourse of attendants clad in costly array drew near to where Constance awaited her with her Roman troops; and on reaching her she gave her the most kindly greeting possible, bidding her welcome, and expressing as much pleasure at seeing her as if she were her own daughter. Side by side, at a gentle and slow pace, they rode into the nearest city; but little did Constance guess what dark and evil thoughts lay hidden beneath her companion's friendly glances.

The fact was that the Sultan's mother had been filled with the greatest indignation and wrath when she had heard that the condition of the marriage with Constance was that all the nation should renounce their own religion for Christianity. She had called together her own councillors, and having put the position before them, she had enlisted their help in a deep and murderous design which before nightfall she hoped to put into execution.

As the bride entered the city with her escort, the Sultan came forth to greet her and lead her within.

Great mirth and rejoicings took place, and when evening drew near a feast was prepared by the Sultaness, to which were invited the bridal couple and all the Christians present. Every one was very eager to accept, for it was a right royal feast, and young and old flocked to it laughing and rejoicing, and eager to partake of the many dainties provided. But before they rose from that festive board, the revellers had paid a heavy price for their feast, for by the act of the Sultaness and the friends in secret conspiracy with her, the whole of the company, including the Sultan, were cruelly massacred as they sat at table. The life of Constance alone was spared, but a worse fate seemed to await her. She was seized and borne in haste to the coast, and there cast adrift on the wide seas in a boat with no rudder, and told to find her way as best she might back to Rome.

For many days and weeks did the unhappy princess float over the great waste of waters. Food had been placed in the boat with her and a certain amount of clothing, and also the treasure that she had brought with her to Syria as her dowry; but of little use did they seem to her, since she was far from reach of land. Through the Grecian Sea her boat carried her, and past the Straits of Gibraltar, until she was out on the wild waves of the great Atlantic Ocean. Many a time did she deem that death must be near, as her frail craft tossed to and fro on the angry breakers, and piteous prayers went up from her heart for help and protection. Indeed it seemed little short of a miracle that she lived through such peril, but she was driven northward until she came to the British coast, and

at last she was cast ashore under the walls of a castle of unknown name in Northumberland.

The warden of the castle, on seeing the wreck, hastened down to the coast, and there he found Constance, so worn out and wretched that she entreated him to end her life forthwith.

The warden saw from the treasure that she had with her that she was a person of importance, and he was also moved to pity by her distress, and took her home to his wife Hermengild, who was filled with sorrow at her sad plight, and treated her with every kindness. Constance was able to make her friends understand her a little by means of a broken kind of Latin, but she determined to tell no one of her real name and position; and in answer to their inquiries she declared that she was so bewildered by her long time at sea that her memory was confused.

For some time she dwelt with these kind people, and her gentleness and kindness won the affection and praise of all with whom she came in contact.

Now, both the warden and his wife Hermengild were heathens; for at that time the whole of the northern part of the country had been conquered by heathen invaders, and the original inhabitants, who had been converted to Christianity, had fled for protection in consequence to the mountain fastnesses of Wales.

But it happened that though the land was inhabited by heathens, there were a few Christians still left there who practised their religion in secret; and in course of time Constance converted Hermengild, and she too became one of the number, though unknown to her husband.

One bright summer's day the two ladies, accompanied by the warden, strolled to the sea-shore to enjoy the sunshine and the sea-breezes, and there, as they rambled on the sands, they came across one of these secret Christians, an old blind man with bent back.

As they drew near to him, he turned his sightless eyes to them, and startled Hermengild with these words,—

"In Christ's dear name dame Hermengild, restore my sight."

Hermengild's heart sank with terror at this, for she feared that if her husband were to discover that she was in truth a Christian he might put her to death; but Constance bade her obey Christ's will in this, as a daughter of the Church should do, and the result was that the man's prayer was granted, and his sight restored. Now was the warden greatly overcome with surprise, and when he turned to Constance for an explanation, she told him that the miracle had been performed by the power of Jesus, and so much struck was the warden by the whole affair that he himself became a Christian.

But life did not continue to go smoothly with the unfortunate Constance for long, and soon terrible misfortune again overtook her.

There was a young knight living at the castle who fell desperately in love with her, much to her annoyance, for he was a bad, evilly disposed man, and it was impossible for her to love him in return.

When he found that this was the case, and that nothing he could say or do would win from Constance any return of his affection, he thought of a horrible

way to bring disgrace and dishonour on her, and thus be avenged for her coldness to him.

One night while the warden himself was absent, this ruffian drew near to the chamber where Hermengild and Constance were sleeping together, and creeping stealthily to their side, he slew Hermengild, and laid the blood-stained knife by Constance, so that it would appear that she had done the murderous deed.

The warden soon returned after this with King Alla, the just and wise ruler of the country, who had been absent on a war with the Scots ; and when he saw his beloved wife slain, and found the knife with which the deed had been done close by Constance, he was not only overwhelmed with grief, but convinced that Constance had murdered Hermengild, and must be brought to punishment. The poor lady herself was too much distressed and overwhelmed with all that had happened to attempt any explanation or self-defence. She was therefore led before King Alla for judgment ; all the story of her mysterious arrival and unknown history was told him, and the evidence as to Hermengild's death laid before him.

Like a lamb brought to the slaughter, the falsely accused Constance stood before her judge, whose kind heart went out in pity at the sad plight of one who, in spite of the evidence against her, seemed so gentle and so good.

The evil knight who had worked for her ruin gave evidence that he himself had seen her do the deed ; but in spite of this the people who heard the trial were unwilling to believe in her guilt.

" It is not to be believed that she hath done such wickedness," they murmured. " Have we not always seen her to be virtuous, and did not Hermengild herself love her as her life ? "

As to this every one about the place bore witness save the false knight alone, who still stuck to what he had said ; and so persistent was he in this statement

that at last Alla himself began to suspect her, though at first he had believed in her innocence.

Alas for Constance, a stranger and alone, who had none to come forward as her champion, and silence for ever the lying tongue of her accuser! But her trust was in Heaven, and falling on her knees, she implored strength and succour from thence. As she knelt before them all with upturned eyes and face as pale as death, such pity again seized the king that tears fell from his eyes, and yet, in the face of the testimony against her, he felt powerless to pronounce her innocent. Doubts of the knight's words were, however, stirring in his heart, and he determined not to condemn her on his word alone. Turning to one of his attendants, he said,—

"Go in all haste for a holy book, and see if the knight will swear even upon the sacred page that she slew Hermengild. And if he does, we will then still be very careful to appoint a trustworthy judge to consider the matter."

A British copy of the Gospels was hastily brought, and the knight, still undaunted, swore on it that Constance was guilty. But even as he swore a wonderful thing happened, which served to prove his own guilt and the innocence of Constance. For, behold! it was as though an unseen hand struck him on the neck, and hardly was the false oath taken before he fell down in a senseless heap on the ground. At the same time a voice was heard proclaiming that Constance had been wrongly accused.

Upon this dismay and terror fell on those present,

for they thought that judgment might overtake them too for suspecting Constance, and in the end the king himself and many others were converted to Christianity. Not only this, but the king was so much charmed with the virtue and beauty of Constance that he married her, all ignorant though he was of her real name and station. As for the false knight, when he had recovered from his swoon, the king gave orders that he should at once be slain in punishment for his treachery.

Thus Constance was made a queen, and all seemed to promise well for her, but again she found a cruel enemy who worked to encompass her ruin. This was the king's mother, Donegild, a woman of a hard, tyrannical nature, who was much annoyed at her son's marriage with an unknown stranger, and in consequence harboured a fierce resentment against Constance.

After the wedding festivities, which were kept up for some days with great rejoicings, much feasting, dancing, and music, the king was obliged to tear himself from his bride and return to his war against the Scots. Tender partings took place between the two, and Constance was left in the castle under the care of the bishop and the warden during her husband's absence.

While the king was away a new joy came to Constance, for a baby boy was born to her. He was christened Mauritius, and a letter telling the joyful news was dispatched to Alla. Now, the messenger who took the letter thought to gain greater favour with those in power if on the way he told the news to Donegild, so he forthwith took the nearest way to her,

and greeting her with great servility, he told of the birth of the infant prince, and how he was bearing a letter containing the news to the king, and could take any message from her to him at the same time if she wished.

The wicked queen's heart rejoiced at this, for immediately she conceived a plan by which this chance could be used to work ill to her hated daughter-in-law. She showed nothing of her design, however, to the messenger, but merely replied that though she had a message to send her son it would not be ready until the next day, and she bade the messenger spend the night under her roof. She then gave him so much ale and strong drink for his supper that he slept more soundly than usual, and while he slept she stole the letter from him and replaced it by another, written in a hand carefully copied from the original. In this she told the king that the baby newly born at the castle was a hideous monster whom no one liked to come near, and that Constance herself was proved to be a wicked spirit brought there by sorcery and enchantment.

When the king read this letter he was overcome with grief, but he kept his trouble to himself, and no word as to the contents of the letter escaped his lips. With his own hand he wrote the reply, and in it he said that his wife and the child were to be kept in safety, and no evil allowed to befall them until he could return home and see for himself how matters stood.

The messenger started forth with this letter; but on the way to the castle he again stopped at Donegild's house, and once more while he slept a drunken

sleep did the wicked queen steal the letter he bore. When she read what the king said she was by no means satisfied, so she set to work once more to counterfeit the writing and send quite a different letter.

In this she bade the warden, on pain of being hanged, to send Constance out of the country on the third day from then. She must be placed in the same boat in which she had arrived with her infant and their belongings, and cast adrift, never more to return to these shores. No explanation for this cruel order was given, for the queen was much too clever to venture upon one; and when the warden read the forged letter next day he was greatly dismayed as well as puzzled at the king's inhuman action, and frequent exclamations of pity broke from his lips as he read it.

The king's orders, however, could not be disobeyed, and Constance was informed of the sad fate before her. The whole castle was filled with sounds of weeping when the news spread, and Constance herself was as pale as death, as with dejected mien she walked to the boat which was to bear her away. But her trust in the Providence which had borne her through so many perils already did not fail her even now.

Her chief distress was for her infant son, and as the child set up a piteous wail she rocked it gently in her arms, and covered its eyes with the kerchief from her own head, as she made a last piteous appeal to the warden.

"Oh, mercy, dear warden!" she entreated, kneeling to him. "At least my little child hath done no ill. Let him dwell here with thee while I go to my fate."

But her words were of no avail. The warden was

filled with compassion for her, but not to an extent which led him to risk his own life.

" If thou darest not save him," she said, " kiss him once in his father's name."

Then with one last lingering look backward, she walked slowly to where the boat awaited her, hushing her baby in her arms.

The crowd pressed closely around her, and turning to them she blessed them and bade them farewell. Then she stepped into the boat.

Once more she was adrift on the wide open sea, with no hope or help save in Heaven.

Part III

Soon after Constance and her infant son had thus left the Northumbrian coast, King Alla returned to the castle, and his first inquiry was for his wife and child. Now at this the heart of the warden grew cold with dismay, for he began to guess that there had been treachery.

He immediately told the king all that had happened, and in proof of his word produced the letter brought to him by the messenger, with the king's own seal attached.

" My lord, as you ordered me, so I have done under fear of death," he said as he showed it.

Then was the king filled with great anxiety and wrath. The messenger was sent for and tortured until he confessed the truth as to all his doings on the journey, and of how he had each time spent a night at the

Court of the old queen. Then, by putting two and two together, the king arrived at unmistakable proof of Donegild's guilt, and in his wrath and indignation he had her slain.

Little hope had he of ever seeing his beloved wife again, or of embracing his little son, and his grief was greater than tongue can tell.

Meanwhile Constance was drifting slowly over the waste of waters. The boat had been well provisioned, and there was food and drink enough to last her for many a day. Besides she had an object to live for now in the little son who so greatly needed her care.

On and on went the frail boat and its burden, often drifting first in one direction and then in another, but, wonderful to relate, always avoiding mishap. So at last it again passed the Straits of Gibraltar, and floated on the waves of the Mediterranean.

It happened by a fortunate chance that sailing on the same waters was a fleet belonging to the Emperor, Constance's father. It was, in fact, returning from an expedition against the Syrians in punishment of their deeds at the time of Constance's marriage to the Sultan. This successfully accomplished, the senator in charge of the expedition was returning triumphant, and as his vessel sailed along with right royal pomp, he saw before him the drifting boat with Constance and her child, and immediately stopped to rescue them. He had no idea at all who she was, and no threats or entreaties would induce Constance to tell him ; but he took her back to Rome and lodged her with his wife, who treated her with every kindness, and who happened, though she knew it not, to be the unhappy lady's own aunt.

Thus did Constance dwell unrecognized and unknown in the very city where she had been honoured and worshipped by all. For a long time she dwelt there quietly, watching over her little son, and devoting herself to works of charity.

But Constance was not destined to remain thus hidden, and wonderful events were soon to happen to alter once more the course of her life.

The king Alla, who had, as we saw, killed Donegild in punishment for her evil deed, was afterwards seized with remorse for this act ; since, wicked and deserving of punishment though she was, the queen was, after all, his own mother.

So much did the thought of what he had done prey on the king's mind, that at last he determined to make a pilgrimage to Rome and obtain absolution from the Pope.

The news that so great a personage was shortly to arrive was soon spread through the city, to which it was brought by messengers sent in advance ; and the senator was chosen to go forth and meet the king with a magnificent equipage, and give him the welcome due to his rank.

After this a very friendly interchange of courtesies took place between the two, and at a feast held by the senator in the king's honour it chanced that the little son of Constance, now growing into quite a big boy, was present, and fixing his eyes on the king's countenance, gazed steadily at him.

The king's attention was in time attracted by this, and turning to the senator, he said,—

" Who is that fair child who stands yonder ? "

" In truth," was the senator's reply, " I know not. He hath a mother, certainly, but of his father I never heard tidings ; " and he then told the king as much as he knew of the boy's history, and of how he had rescued him and his mother as they drifted to and fro on the open sea.

" And God knows," he concluded, " that never in all my life have I known or heard of a more virtuous

lady. I venture to say of her that she would choose rather to have a knife through her heart than to do any deed of evil or of shame."

Now, as the senator spoke of the mother's virtue the king was gazing at the face of the boy, who bore a striking likeness to Constance, and he began to wonder whether it were possible that it was his wife of whom the senator was telling him. It seemed hardly to be possible that it could be so, for he had long mourned Constance as dead ; but the mere hope, faint though it was, that she had been rescued caused Alla to rise hastily from the feast and accompany the senator to his house in order to see the lady for himself.

" For how know I," he argued with himself, " but that the good Christ who brought her safely before to my own land may thus once more have preserved her in safety and brought her to her former home ? "

When they reached the senator's house, Constance was summoned in all haste to the king's presence ; but when she heard who awaited her, she was in no haste to obey. The memory of the cruel act which had cast her and her baby adrift on the sea stood between her and her love, for of course she knew nothing of the deception which had been practised on them by Donegild.

However, she did not dare to disobey the command, and trembling so that she could hardly stand, she came before the king.

At the very first glance any doubts that Alla had were put to flight, and he knew indeed that his long-lost wife was before him.

But Constance received his offered embraces in cold, mute silence, and in vain he wept and tried to make her understand how much he had always loved her.

So great was her distress as the thought of his seem-

ing cruelty swept over her, that she fainted before him, and in vain he protested his innocence.

" By God and all His saints," he cried, " I am as innocent of the evil that befell thee as my son Mauritius is like unto thee in face."

At last Constance grew calmer, and when she had listened to all that Alla had to tell, she understood how in truth he was guiltless of any evil intent towards her. Then great indeed was their happiness, as with hearts united once more they tenderly kissed each other again. Such joy as theirs could only be surpassed by that of heaven itself.

Their long separation being now ended, and their grief turned into joy, the thoughts of Constance turned to her father, the Emperor, and she begged her husband to invite him to a banquet, but to keep her own identity a secret from him beforehand, and this was done. Some say that the child Mauritius bore the message to his grandfather, and that the Emperor was struck then and there with the likeness between him and his long-lost daughter; but against this it is hardly likely that Alla would treat so great a monarch with so little courtesy as to send a child to him with his message. Let us more reasonably suppose that Alla himself waited on him. Be that as it may, the Emperor was graciously pleased to accept the invitation for the next day; and when the time came, Alla and Constance rode forth with great display to meet him. When the Emperor approached them, Constance alighted and knelt before him in the street and told him that she was his daughter.

" I am your daughter Constance," she said, " whom once you sent away to Syria. It was I who was cast forth alone on the stormy waters and intended for death. Now, gentle father, I entreat you of your favour let me go no more to heathen lands, but be grateful to this my lord," and she looked towards Alla, " for his gracious care of me."

Who can tell of the joy there now was among the three, as with light hearts they went together to the feast prepared in the Emperor's honour.

The story is nearly at an end. In due course Alla took his sweet wife back with him to England, where they lived long in happiness and in the performance of good deeds.

But when at last King Alla died, Constance once more sought her native land and dwelt there with her father, who was still alive to welcome her back.

As for the little boy Mauritius, his story is too long to tell here. Suffice it to say that in time he succeeded his grandfather as emperor, and reigned at Rome with all virtue.

Thus have we seen great joy succeed great woe; and here ends the story of Constance.

THE WIFE OF BATH

THERE was from Bath a good WIFE and a witty ;
But she was somewhat deaf, and that was pity.
In the cloth trade such crowds unto her went,
She beat the looms of Ypres and of Ghent.
In all the parish good wife none was there
That to mass-offering step before her dare ;
And if they did, certain so wrath was she
That she at once forgot all charity.
Her folded head-cloths were of finest ground ;
I durst swear almost that they weighed a pound,
Which on the Sunday were upon her head.
Her stockings fine were of a scarlet red,
Full straightly tied, and shoes right fair and new.
Bold was her face, and fair and red of hue.
She was a worthy woman to the core :
Five husbands had she brought from the church door ;
Not reckoning other company in youth :
But there's no need to tell this now, in sooth.
And thrice had she been at Jerusalem ;
She had passed over many a strange stream ;
Cologne she knew ; Bologna, Rome, had seen ;
And in Galicia, at the shrine, had been.
She had known much of journeying by the way.
Her teeth had gaps between them, sooth to say.
Upon an ambler easily she sat,
With wimple large, and on her head an hat,

As broad as is a buckler or a targe.
A riding-skirt about her round hips large
Was tied, and sharp spurs were on both her feet.
In fellowship well could she laugh, and treat
Of remedies of love she learnt by chance,
For of that art she well knew the old dance.

R. H. HORNE.

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE

THE events of which I am about to tell took place in the olden times when good King Arthur ruled, and when the land was full of fairies. At that time, so I have heard tell, the fairy queen often used to dance with a merry company of elves on the greensward. Very different is the country now, for at the present time there are no longer any fairies to be seen dancing on the green, or hiding behind bushes, or in the dairy, or other farm premises where they were once wont to linger, for priests and friars have driven them all away with their exorcisms.

Well, at this long-ago time when, as I say, fairies had not yet been cleared away from the land, it happened that on a certain day a young knight at the Court of King Arthur had to appear before the king to be judged for a serious offence against the rules of true knightliness. So grave, indeed, was his misbehaviour that the great king felt compelled to pass sentence of death upon him; and this would have been carried out if it had not been for the queen and other ladies of the Court, who, touched by the young knight's fine bearing and handsome appearance, interceded on his behalf.

The king, moved by this appeal, decided to hand the young man over to the queen, and gave her permission to deal with him as she chose ; whereupon the queen turned to him and spake thus,—

" Young man, your life is still not secure, but it is in my power to save you. This will I do if you can give me the right answer to a question : What is it that women wish for most of all ?

" I give you a year and a day in which to find out the answer, and I warn you to be very careful ; for if at the end of that time you cannot give me a satisfactory reply, your life will be the forfeit."

With a sorrowful heart the young knight thanked the queen and went his way, for he decided to leave the Court and devote the year granted him in trying to find the right answer to her question.

To and fro he wandered, putting the question to every one he came across, but getting no further in the process, since he could nowhere find any two people who agreed as to the answer. Many and differing indeed were the opinions given. Some said that what a woman wishes for most is riches ; some said honour, and others gaiety ; others again said fine clothes, others flattery. One thought that women desired above all to be married, and another that what they cared for most was to be free to do as they pleased and not to be tied to any man.

Thus the whole year passed, and when the last day of it came the unfortunate knight felt himself no nearer to an answer for the queen than he was when he started forth. With a sorrowful heart and downcast countenance he rode slowly through a forest on his way back to the Court, when suddenly he saw on an open space before him twenty-four ladies engaged in a dance.

" Now," he thought, " is surely a last chance to get an answer for the queen," and he hastened in the direction of the ladies. Wonderful to relate, as he

drew near they all disappeared, nor had he the least notion whither they had gone. They had all vanished, and in their place was no one but an old and ugly hag, who sat on the ground where they had been.

At sight of the young man the old woman rose and addressed him thus,—

"Sir knight, wherefore come you this way, since it is no thoroughfare? Tell me openly on what errand you are bound, for it may be I can help you. The aged have often much wisdom."

"My good mother," replied the knight, "I am but a dead man to-morrow unless I can say what it is that women most wish for. If you can tell me this I am willing to repay you in any way I can."

"I will tell you before nightfall," she said, "on one condition. That is, that you plight me your troth here and now, that when we meet again you will of a surety grant me any boon I may then ask."

The knight readily complied with this condition, and the hag continued,—

"Very well, then, rest assured that your life shall be saved. I will give you an answer to which I am sure not only the queen but every woman in the land will agree. I will myself go with you. Let us waste no time in further speech, but set out at once."

She then whispered something in his ear, and they started together for the Court.

There was a great assembly ready the next day to await the knight's return and hear his answer. The queen sat in state to judge the matter, and the Court was crowded with women of all ages, rank, and con-

dition—wives, maids, and widows—all alike eager to hear what the knight would say.

Now the knight was ordered to appear, silence was enjoined, and all listened in eager expectation.

The knight stood very still and calm, and when the question was put to him as to what it was that women most wished for, he replied,—

" My liege lady, what women wish for above all is to rule over their husbands and have the mastery ; now this is the true answer to your question, and I can give no other though you kill me for it."

In the whole Court, however, there was not a single woman, wife, widow, or maid, who contradicted this. On the contrary, they one and all declared that he deserved to have his life. The queen being also satisfied, all present thought the matter brought to a conclusion, and the Court was about to disperse when there was an unexpected interruption, for as the queen rose to leave the hall, the old woman whom the knight had met on the green barred her way.

" Mercy, my sovereign lady queen," she said, " ere you leave the Court grant me justice. It was I who taught the knight the answer he has just given, and in return he plighted his troth to me that the first request I should make of him he would grant, if it was in his power to do so."

She then turned to the knight.

" Before this Court then, I pray you, sir knight," she said, " that you take me as your wife. Well you know that I have saved your life, and the condition on which I did so. If I am speaking falsely, say so."

" Alas ! and well-a-day," the dismayed knight made reply, " I must own that it is even as you say. Never-

theless, I entreat you to make some other request. Take all my goods, if you will, but ask me not to wed you."

"Nay, nay," quoth she, "I care not for your gold or wealth. Though I be poor and ill-favoured, all I ask is to be loved by you, and to be your wife."

There was therefore no escape for the sorely distressed knight. His word was pledged, and much against his will he married the old woman.

Now if you expect to hear all about a wedding-feast, and of the display and joyousness of one, you will be disappointed. For the fact is, there was no wedding-feast at all. The very next day the reluctant knight married his unattractive bride quite privately, and having done it, he felt he could not endure to see her ugly countenance by daylight, and hid himself, like an owl, until it was dusk.

At nightfall he did screw up his courage to go back to her, but he behaved in such a discourteous, disagreeable manner that at last she took him to task.

"Really, my dear husband," she said, "this is surely not the manner in which a knight of King Arthur's Court should behave. Am I not your own wife, and moreover did I not save your life? When have I done any ill to you that you treat me thus? You behave like a man beside himself. What have I done worthy of blame? I beseech you, tell me my fault, if any, that I may make amends."

"Amends, forsooth!" groaned the knight; "nay, there can be no amends. Have I not wedded you who are old and ill-favoured and of low degree?"

"Is this, in truth, the sole cause of your disturbed mind?" she asked.

"Why, certainly," he made reply, "and small wonder, too."

"Well, then," she said, "listen to me, for in truth you are not regarding the matter rightly. True worth and nobility are not only belonging to rank and gentle birth. He who does gentle deeds is the true gentleman, whether he be of high or low estate; and on the other hand, he who has a high ancestry and disgraces it, is not worthy of the name. You object to me because I am of poor and low position; but, indeed, goodness and worth go not necessarily with wealth, and some of the noblest men and women have been born and lived in poverty. If I be of humble origin, I may claim what is better, for I have led a life free from blame, and better than wealth and position is it to live virtuously. And as for being ugly and old, are not these better than to be unfaithful and frivolous?

"Now choose, I pray you, whether indeed you would rather have me, who will be true and gentle, and make you a loving, virtuous wife for all my days, or to have one young and better favoured, but false and untrustworthy."

The knight remained for some little time in silence, pondering over his wife's words; then he said to her,—

"There is much wisdom in what you say. You are my wife and my love, and it were better to have such as you for wife than a younger and less virtuous bride."

"Then kiss me," came the joyful answer. "As you have thus chosen, I vow you shall have both virtue and beauty in your wife. Now kiss me, I say, and see whether I am in truth fair or not."

With that the knight kissed her right heartily on the lips, and behold, as he did so, she changed into a young and most beautiful woman; for the fact was

she was a fairy, and had disguised herself as an old hag to test him.

So after this they lived together in the most perfect happiness for the rest of their lives, each obeying and considering the other, as husbands and wives should do.

EPILOGUE

(To be used during a second or later reading of this book)

GEOFFREY CHAUCER (page 7)

1. Why cannot we find Chaucer's birth certificate?
2. Why does one writer call Chaucer "the first user of our fair language"?
3. Note that the title *Sir* was also given by courtesy to learned men and clerics, as well as to knights.
4. Comment upon the amount of Chaucer's ransom. How much would the country pay to-day to ransom Thomas Hardy or George Bernard Shaw?
5. Was Chaucer's pension an "old-age pension"?
6. Compare the portrait in the frontispiece with the landlord's description of Chaucer on page 11.
7. What is *The Canterbury Tales*?
8. Name another poem by Chaucer. Say something about the circumstances of its composition.

"NATURE'S SWEET CHORISTER" (page 15)

9. Find out what is meant by "in the Bull" by investigating the meaning of the word Zodiac.
10. What is meant by "I was happéd thus"?
11. With regard to Stanza III it is interesting to

note that a modern writer, R. L. Stevenson, speaks somewhere of the times when " one cannot sleep for fulness of living."

12. Collect the epithets or adjectives which the poet applies to the grass.

13. What is the poet's cure for sadness of heart ?

14. Is Chaucer a poet of the town or of the country ?

15. Find a pretty word-picture on page 18.

16. Which stanza describes very beautifully the song of the nightingale ?

THE LEGEND OF ARIADNE (page 20)

17. What was the tribute imposed upon Athens by King Minos of Crete ?

18. What was the name given to the monster ?

19. What is there which is skilful in construction in the seven lines beginning " Well mayst thou weep " ?

20. " So many curious windings " (page 23). This was the famous labyrinth, the remains of which Sir Arthur Evans discovered in Crete not many years ago.

21. What do you frankly think of the speech of Theseus reported on page 24 ?

22. Which of the sisters had a plan for the rescue of Theseus ?

23. What is your thought about the love speeches of Theseus and Ariadne ?

24. Where must we look for the real description of what Theseus did in the Minotaur's den ?

25. The " isle in the wild sea " was named Naxos.

26. Which is the most dramatic word-picture on page 28 ?

27. Does Chaucer explain clearly why Theseus wedded Ariadne instead of Phædra ?

SOME OF THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS (page 30)

28. What is your opinion of the host's qualities as a leader ?

29. How does Chaucer act as a kind of historian ?

30. How can you tell that he was a man of high ideals of life ?

31. What were, in Chaucer's opinion, the marks of a well-bred youth ?

THE KNIGHT, THE SQUIRE, AND THE YEOMAN (page 37)

32. Explain " Zephyrus " and the " Ram."

33. What is a palmer ?

34. Compare the language of the first section of this poem (pages 37, 38) with the prose story on pages 30, 31, from " It was the season " to " start with them for Canterbury."

35. What general idea of a knight of this period is given in the second section ?

36. Which lines in the description of the knight sound best to your ear ?

37. Whence does Chaucer draw his comparisons or likenesses in his description of the Squire ?

38. What was expected of a young squire of the Age of Chivalry ? (See page 39.)

THE KNIGHT'S TALE OF PALAMON AND ARCITE (page 41)

39. Connect the beginning of this story with a poem by Chaucer which you have already read.

40. Connect the beginning of this story with a well-known Shakespeare play.

41. At what dramatic point on page 43 does the real story begin ?

42. Why does Chaucer choose a May morning for the beginning of events (page 44) ?

43. Who saw Emily first ?

44. What lesson does the poet wish to drive home on page 49 ?

45. Up to this point (page 50) which of the two knights has your sympathy ?

46. Put the conversation of the cousins about Emily into the form of a scene in a play.

47. What is your estimate of the character of Arcite ?

48. How did the two men differ in character ? (See page 56, where each is compared to a certain animal.)

49. What is your opinion of Arcite's speech on page 55 ?

50. The kings at the tournament were glorious to behold, but what is the prettiest thing on page 61 ?

51. What is your opinion of Emily's prayer to Diana ?

52. Do the three incidents in the temples show how the story is to end ?

53. What mistake has the artist made in drawing the top picture on page 67 ?

54. Show how the promise made by Saturn at the foot of page 64 was carried out.

55. Was Emily's petition to Diana granted ?

56. What are the high points or dramatic crises of the story ?

57. What is your opinion of the ending ? Would you have had it end differently ? If so, how would you like it to end ?

THE SQUIRE'S TALE (page 74)

58. What is the climax of the praise showered upon Cambuscán ?

59. Ovid was a poet of Rome, and the Mantuan was Virgil, the greatest of all the Roman poets, who wrote the story of Æneas.

60. Aries was the Bull, one of the signs of the Zodiac. Chaucer is very fond of astrology.

61. Find a good metaphor on page 75.

62. What does the poet mean by saying that the messenger's " cheer was suited to his words " ?

63. Who had made the horse of brass ?

64. How was the horse set in motion ?

65. In reading aloud, pronounce " operation," " constellation," and other words ending in " tion " with an extra syllable—*op-er-a-ti-on*, etc.

66. In which well-known story do we read of a magic ring ?

67. Of what other famous sword or swords does the sword of this tale remind you ?

68. In which old tale does an artificial horse play a prominent part ?

69. What is meant by

" Divers the folk, divers the fantasy " ?

70. What old meaning is given to the word " senseless " (page 79, line 24) ?

71. Which later English poet tells of a magic mirror ?

72. What examples of Chaucer's fun are to be found on pages 82, 83 ?

73. In what respect did Canace resemble Emily of the Knight's Tale ?

74. Find a pretty word-picture on page 84.

75. A falcon peregrine was one used for hunting.
76. What simile is repeated on page 86 ?
77. How could you mend the second line on page 87 ?
78. A tiercelet is a young male falcon.
79. Make an attempt at finishing the story of the falcon. Remember that it was a common thing in old legends for princesses to be turned by magicians' or witches' spells into birds and beasts.

MORE OF THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS (page 91)

80. Collect hints on manners and customs of the period from this prose narrative.
81. Are there any traces of gentle fun or satire in this description ?

THE PRIORESS AND THE PARSON (page 94)

82. What is meant by " it gave her pain " in line 22, page 94 ?
83. Explain

" To curse for tythes and ransack poverty."

84. What can we discover from the description of the Parson of the ways of less worthy parsons of Chaucer's time ?
85. Which lines do you like best in this account of the poor Parson ?

THE PRIEST'S TALE (page 97)

86. Collect from page 97 information on the life of a cottager in Chaucer's day.

87. What was the lesson in this tale for men and women ?

88. The story comes from ancient Greece. How would Chaucer's setting of the tale differ from that of Æsop ?

THE CLERK OF OXFORD (page 107)

89. What was meant by the word " clerk " in Chaucer's day ?

90. Which lines in this description are easiest to remember ?

THE CLERK OF OXFORD'S TALE (page 108)

91. What is the subject or theme of Part I of this tale ?

92. What were Griselda's good points ?

93. Show that the Marquis had a sense of humour and was fond of mystifying people. Remember this quality (or fault) as you go on with the story.

94. What is your opinion of the wooing of the Marquis ?

95. What is the central point of the longest paragraph on page 114 ?

96. Note how the Clerk (on page 117) seems to beg his hearers for patience. Otherwise they might have stopped his tale on page 118. Why ?

97. What is your opinion of Griselda's submission ? If she had acted otherwise, what would have happened to the story ?

98. Griselda *does* show some sign of feeling in the speech on page 122, beginning " As I have said." What do you think it is ?

99. Was there any reason for Griselda taking the news of her divorcement so calmly ?

100. How does Griselda show that she was not lacking in spirit, and even a slight touch of resentment?

101. Do you like the ending of this tale? If not, how would you like it to end?

102. Petrarch was the poet of Italy from whose works Chaucer drew the outline of the Clerk's Tale.

THE FRANKLIN (page 134)

103. Look up in a dictionary the meaning of the words "epicure" and "mew."

104. Which do you consider the most noteworthy lines of this description?

105. What is the historical value of these lines?

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE (page 136)

106. Of what previous character in this book does Dorigen's knight remind you (page 136)?

107. Whose opinion is given in the paragraph on page 137, beginning "Now the matter"?

108. Why did Dorigen's friends take her away from the sea?

109. What example of Chaucer's repetition occurs on page 140?

110. In what way does the small picture on page 139 strike the keynote of this story?

111. What do you think suggested to Dorigen the nature of the task which she gave Aurelius?

112. What is your answer to the Franklin's question?

113. Was any of these characters entirely free from fault? Discuss this point.

THE MAN OF LAW (page 152)

114. Give, in a few words, your general idea of the Man of Law.

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE (page 153)

115. Does the background of the small picture on page 153 show the city of Rome ?

116. Why do you think that many Eastern houses have rounded roofs ?

117. Make a list of Chaucer's beautiful and virtuous maidens of whom you have read in this book.

118. In what old story of Greece do we read of some one being cast adrift in a boat ?

119. Trace on a map the course of the boat which carried the princess.

120. What are the high points or crises of this story ?

121. What examples of coincidence does this story contain ?

122. How did Constance differ from Griselda (page 168) ?

123. In how many of Chaucer's stories in this book does " great joy succeed great woe " ?

THE WIFE OF BATH (page 171)

124. What can you discover from these lines of the ways of a wealthy woman of Chaucer's time ?

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE (page 173)

125. What was the most difficult part of the task imposed by the queen upon the young knight ?

126. What are the high points of this story ?

127. In what other well-known stories does a kiss work wonders ?

128. Which of these tales of Chaucer do you like best, and why ?

THE END

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